



straight to the point

Sunday, August 19, 2007

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TECHNOLOGY

Colleges Shifting to Vision Training to Enhance Athletic Performance

VERNON HILLS, Ill. -- College athletic teams are shifting their attention to specialized visual skills training to help their performance on the athletic fields.

NCAA Women's Softball Final Four Teams, champion Arizona, runner-up Northwestern, Alabama and Tennessee, along with Men's Baseball Finalist, Georgia Tech, are all working closely with Chicago-area ophthalmologist Dr. Barry Seiller on a myriad of visual skills.

"The competitive nature of sports has led to concentrating on enhancing visual skills," Dr. Seiller said. "Michael Jordan or a Dwayne Wade just don't happen to be good shooters, but rather they are fortunate to have outstanding visual skills. But most every other athlete has to work at it."

Through a computerized program Dr. Seiller is working closely with athletes to improve the overall visual system, which includes depth perception, tracking, recognition and concentration.

Known for his skills as a highly recognized eye surgeon, Dr. Seiller has performed Lasik procedures on a number of athletes to correct nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism. But he determined that eyesight wasn't the entire solution for elite athlete performance.

"For athletes who want to reach the next level of play or just for the sake of overall performance, improving visual skills can be the deciding factor," said Arizona University Women's Softball coach Mike Candrea. "We're finding that visual performance is a critical companion to our time spent practicing and working out."

Major League Baseball teams are also recognizing the value of visual skills, especially in light of all the performance enhancing drugs that have become the bane of the league.

The Cincinnati Reds and Milwaukee Brewers have their scouts measuring visual performance for player evaluations prior to considering drafting them, while their minor league players are training their eyes to enhance tracking a baseball with Dr. Seiller.

"You have to be able to pick up the speed of a fastball or the break on the curve to be an elite hitter in the majors," said Cincinnati Reds minor league director Grant Greisser. "It's all about gaining that edge to be successful in the MLB."

All the sports teams at Georgia Tech have been introduced to vision training by Dr. Seiller, as well as the U.S. Luge and Bobsled teams, the Nebraska Rifle team, in addition to the college football teams at Tennessee, Vanderbilt and Northwestern.

"I know that a part of my success last season was directly due to improving my visual skills," said Northwestern quarterback and the Big Ten's leading passer, Brett Basanez about his work with Dr. Seiller.

Other highly competitive sports are quickly jumping on the bandwagon once they realize there's an edge intrinsic to visual performance training.

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