

S5: EPISODE 9

with Jon Kec, D.C.

CHIROPRACTICAL

WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING AN NFL CHIROPRACTOR?



Jon Kec

Welcome to chiropractic. I'm your host, Jon Kec, and football season's underway. So let's talk about football. But through the lens of chiropractic care, Let's talk about what it's really like to keep some of the best athletes in the world performing at their peak from locker room prep to game day recovery.

How can a chiropractor be a vital part of an NFL Team's health staff?

Joining us today is Dr. Alan Sokoloff, a chiropractor for the Baltimore Ravens. Baltimore Orioles, Dr. Sokoloff or "Dr. Sok" as his patients call him, has been the team chiropractor with the Ravens since 1999. He's also the owner and clinic director of Yelich Chiropractic Clinic and Rehabilitation in Maryland, where he is practiced for the last 38 years

We'll explore how Dr. Sokoloff got himself into this unique career path, what his day-to-day looks like,, and the role that chiropractic plays for those athletes.

From injury prevention to performance enhancement at the highest level of the game. Dr. Sokoloff, welcome to chiropractic.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Thank you for having me. I, I, I am legit excited to be here and, and especially after, you know, meeting personally, I'm, I'm even more fired up, so

Jon Kec

Yeah. Well, we're glad to have you. Um, I appreciate finding some time for us. I know this is an exceptionally busy time of year for you.

Um, so thanks for cramming us into a, an overly packed schedule. I'm sure.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Yeah. It, it, it, you, you are right. This is, um, actually, things calm down a little bit now that training camp is over football wise. Um, and now we're set into a regular schedule, but it's still overlaps with football. Um, I mean, it still overlaps with baseball, so there, there are some crisscross as I'm repping here.

Jon Kec

I was surprised to see you in the, uh, the Orioles gear this morning, but

that, uh, I, I guess, are they on your books for today or,

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Right. So, um, I lay out my wardrobe, uh, for the week. Um, today is yes, with the Orioles. Tomorrow we'll be with the Ravens. Thursday will be with the, or. I don't lay out my clothes, but, um, but I, I do have to remember where I have to be and when, and thank goodness for, uh, little reminders on my phone.

Jon Kec

Yeah, right. Schedules that drive our lives for sure. Share as much as you are comfortable with in any of these questions. Uh, but, you know, let's start with I think maybe the easy one, most common stuff you see. So if somebody is looking to get that education, whether it's some additional letters or just some additional reading and information.

In your world, football, baseball, what are the most common injuries you're seeing? What are the best things to really be the expert at if you're trying to get into the sports realm?

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Okay, so, so that's a great question. Um. Um, instrument assisted stuff. I, I do it, but so do athletic trainers, PTs, um, dry needling is really cool and, and, and becoming very popular with a lot of athletes, a lot of teams, but athletic trainers, PTs. Can also do that. Um, soft tissue techniques are, are really cool, right?

'cause you need to get your hands on and, and get 'em dirty. But then again, um, massage therapists, athletic trainers, PTU, um. Rehab. Rehab is great, right? Because you, I, I, I think our part of the issue with our, uh, practices in general as chiropractors, we don't do enough to teach our patients what to do to help themselves.

So, um, but then again, strength and conditioning does rehab, pt, gat, how about adjusting? How about, how about being a good adjuster? How about. Being a good maybe extremity adjuster too. So thi this is an easy one for me. The answer is you have to have, you have to be, as my friend, Dr. Spencer Barron would say like a, a, a fifth degree black belt

in adjusting. And you need, and you need a backup plan. 'cause what if it's not gonna move the same way that you've done it before? How else are you gonna move that joint if it even needs to move? And knowing when not to adjust. Not just have the skills to adjust,

Jon Kec

What about, maybe a little more specific, again, names will be changed to protect the innocent, um, but the, I don't wanna say craziest injury, but let's just take the, the, the craziest scenario. You know, you had this player who. Absolutely needs to play Sunday and there is absolutely no way their body should be in a position to play Sunday.

But you were able to get 'em there with the help of a team, obviously, or just the weirdest, craziest experience you've had working with a team that you just don't think you'd ever had working in an office, whatever fits kind of that realm Best.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

So, all right. So, um, uh, I, I have, I have a book of these stories. Actually. My wife wants me to write the book. I really don't have a book. It's just a couple pieces of scrap paper land here. It's, so I'll, I'll share this. So, um, one of our more. Popular football athletes. This was before the, um, super Bowl 2012.

Um, I, I had gone down with the team and I had gotten to work with, um, a lot. All the athletes, you know, they practice. We set up these huge training rooms in the hotel and, um, we would, uh, treat every day. And, um, it was Sunday of the Super Bowl and we were in New Orleans and Sunday morning, um, they came and they brought the adjusting table and all, most of the other stuff to the stadium for the game that night.

And one athlete in particular. Who was, uh, a, a, a big time athlete, came in to get adjusted before, and, um, we didn't have the adjusting table, so I said, here, lay, lay down. We had like almost banquet tables. Um, so I went ahead and adjusted 'em and um, he had done whatever else that he usually does and, uh, got up and he's like.

All right, thanks. And walked away, and I was like, whoa, whoa, whoa. Wait a minute. What? Wait, what? What's this? Why are you, you, you know, we, I always watch patients when they walk into a room and I wanna see them when they walk out of the room, right? Because we're, we're still, I, I, I wanna see what's going on.

So he said, well, I still feel this back here a little bit. I'm like, all right, well, what's. Figure out a different way to do it. So I took a sheet, I laid it on the ground, and I see her just lay on the ground here for a second. And all of a sudden, you remember the old E when EF Hutton talks, everybody listens.

Now all the eyes in the training room are, are on me and this particular athlete. And, um. And I, I knew it was a, it was a small anterior thoracic, and I laid him down and, and uh, all of a sudden we went, boom. And it was like one of those TikTok audibles, and, and he was, he was like, oh my gosh. Uh, and I'm, I'm like, uh, this is going on the inside.

But he is like, the pain is gone like that, that it was, it's gone. I'm like. Of course it is. Just have a good day. I'll, I'll check you. Uh, check you at the stadium before. And everybody was like, oh, you know?

Jon Kec

You can hear the audible really like just gasp in the room.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Right. So now I'll fast forward. Um, we played the game, that's the, the Super Bowl where the lights went out.

They came back on, I tripped over the extension cord. So, um, hours later we, we are at the post game party. And it's, uh, two, three in the morning, whatever. And I saw that athlete and he saw me and we like walked towards each other. Actually, he stood there, I walked to him 'cause he was holding court. Um, and, and it felt like, like one of those brook shield, slow motion beach hair fly.

And, and, and, and we hugged and uh, just to say, Hey. And he said thank you. Like. Like, thank you. I, I didn't have to think about that pain. So in the, the big picture for, I'm like, wait a minute. You just, you just won a Super Bowl and you remember that adjustment from like 12. So I, I share that story because people don't understand the power that not only they have in their hands, but.

The, the power that they have to help people and people will remember.

And we need to get up every day and walk into every single patient and have that passion that, hey, they're gonna remember this and that. That's kind of, that's one of my, my favorite stories that I retell to myself periodically. If I'm having a bad day, I, well, yo, I, I, I can't reflect it on my patients.

I, I need to make a difference.

Jon Kec

You know, you're, you're in a very, uh, unique position to give us some insight into more than just maybe the football side of things. A little bit of baseball too. We can, we can kind of cross some conversations there, but I think you're in a position where a lot of people early on in their, their journey into chiropractic, often as students, sometimes in the, the, the road roadmapping of the early part of their career, say they want to get to.

How do I work with professional athletes? How do I work with these teams? So what about you? Where did your journey start? What, what, what drew you to, to chiropractic first and then this specific sports side of chiropractic second.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Well, it, it's, it's. Um, a, a great story. So my story starting is probably the same story as many others, sort of. And then my journey to where I am is what I teach people now. So I kind of live, um. What I teach and walk the walk kind of thing. So I, I, I got into chiropractic. I wanted to get into healthcare, um, and I didn't know what I wanted to do.

And I used to be a disc jockey, but, and back in the day there used to be these flat black things called records. I don't know if you're a little young, so you might not remember. Um. And I would, uh, dish jockey parties, weddings, whatever. And I would carry albums and carry speakers. And I had jacked up my back and, um, had, uh, gone to a chiropractor in my hometown, which was really kind of weird because he was on the second story walk up and I'm like, this doesn't seem right.

So, um. Anyway, I, I had great success. Um, I saw a lot of opportunity here in Maryland. I'm from New Jersey, and at the time, the average age of a chiropractor in Maryland was 55. And I'm like, wait, there's opportunity here. So, uh, I ended up, uh, coming to Maryland, settling here, got into a group practice because I enjoy working with others.

Um, and that's the chiropractic side of things.

Jon Kec

Okay, so what about then your, your first foray into sports? Was it with the Ravens? Was it with the Orioles?

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

No, no. This is. My thing is all about planting seeds. So I had gone back to where I went to undergrad at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and, uh, started helping and working with them, getting my hands on athletes. Um, I also, if you're really bored one night, look up, uh, Reebok National Aerobic Championships, ESPN 1990.

Around there. Um, I got involved in treating, uh, national aerobic athletes around the country, and then I got involved in judging, um, and started setting up networks of chiropractors around the country to take care of these athletes. And then there was another network of, uh, doctors that were taking care of.

Uh, people that were involved in Broadway plays that would tour the country. So the, this, the network started to develop. Um, and then most importantly, I got involved locally. I got involved in my town. I got involved with, um, teaching simple things like. Uh, preventing heat related illness and dehydration, um, sports injuries to parents, coaches, and kids.

And at first it was just, you know, because I wanted to, um, talk about who I was and yes, come join my practice and come in as patients,

but then it. Kind of turned into an addiction where I was doing all these little events for all these little sports organizations and then started to do it at a county level, and, and then it, it just grew from there.

Jon Kec

So I, I think it's a common theme from a lot of the conversations I've had lately is just getting involved, right? Saying, saying yes to things, being willing to do the things that really give you that face time with anybody, because you never know who's gonna be the right person.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Right. And, and you know what, it, it's, for me, it was not, I'm not going out there and I'm pimping that I'm a chiropractor,

but it, but it's, I'm a, I'm a healthcare provider. And I care about my community, right? And I'm gonna spend the time to teach you what to do to help yourself. Like a lot of the things that I I that I did were, were in the field of preventing concussions and recognizing concussions.

But I don't want you bringing your concussed kid to my office now. There are some really good, uh, neurological chiropractic based people. Yeah. Let 'em go there. Let 'em

Jon Kec

Live in your world though.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

No, it it, you know what, and, and that's another way that I have survived 26 years in the NFL, is that I know my lane. That's not my lane.

The the other, the other one I don't deal with is nutrition. But that's a, and it's inside joke. But, and, and, and share information. And then, oh, by the way, your kid did get concussed. How about, you know, you, you know, you went over here and you're getting your kid taken care of. Therefore, some of the neurological things that I don't deal with, but oh by the way, wasn't there a mechanism of injury that happened?

Aren't there some secondary things and don't some of them crisscross with, with the symptoms that your child has? So that's how I, um. Survive and thrive in the sports chiropractic world.

Jon Kec

Well what about your, your time with some of these professional teams, the Orioles, the Ravens? Was there a specific, you know, pivotal moment that, that really kind of got that, that interaction or that relationship started? Can you kind of trace back to one time in your life?

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Yeah, so it, it, it started before that my, I always wanted to go work at the Olympic Training Center

in Colorado Springs, and back then it was like a two year wait list to try and get in, and you had to have at least five years team experience. Um, I went through courses to get, uh, postgraduate, uh, letters after my name.

Um, and it wasn't so much to get the letters, but it was to get the knowledge. And I still preach that today. You know, you do don't, don't, don't go take these classes just to put letters after your name. They mean nothing in the, in the real world. But if you want the knowledge that that's. That's the important part.

But going out to the Olympic Training Center, and I'm working on some of the top athletes in the world, in the US and I'm doing it right alongside athletic trainers, physical therapists, MDSs, and we worked together and, and, and it was at that point I realized, what, what does sports medicine mean? And to me it means.

Communication and, um, my, I, I have a sweet 16 of things that I teach when I'm, when I'm out and about and my number one in the Sweet 16 is leaving your ego at the door. And sports medicine teaches you to do that work together as a team for the betterment and the wellbeing of the athlete. So if anything was a, a jump off point for me, it was there.

And then applying what I learned there. To, that's what these teams look for. They want a team player.

Jon Kec

I think that's one of the things in talking with some other people that have been in your position that I, I think maybe isn't really fully understood outside looking in. Right. We, we all come in from our personal experience. We've got our clinics, we work with our patients, and we have some, you know, some interaction with other healthcare providers and stuff.

But in our clinic. We're, we're the leader, we're the

boss. Right. And in, in a, in a professional athlete's training room, you're not,

in most cases, I would say, right. Who's really running the show in that world.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

So, uh, and, and, and this, you, you brought up a, a great point in chiropractic school, they do a great job of teaching you to be the king of your clinic with your patients. So one thing, another part of the Sweet 16 that people don't understand, when you go to work with a team or for a team, those athletes, those players are not your patients. You're a tool.

You are, you are hired to do this. And they have other people that are doing all those other things that maybe you do that in your office, but they don't need it there. They have people that do it and oh, by the way, they're with those athletes. Every day you're a hired gun, you're coming in, you get a snapshot.

Of what's going on, you don't know the big picture. So within these organizations, I'm fortunate enough to work with, uh, as I mentioned, athletic trainers and physical therapists that, that know the athlete well, that know my lane and could say, Hey, can you help with this? Can you do that? Um, but I, I gotta say probably like 80% of what I do is more performance enhancement on both the, in, in all sports than, than, okay, this is broken, fix it.

For me going to a facility once or twice a week is not gonna get that athlete ready for Sunday.

It's, it's the teamwork, it's the stuff that everyone else is doing behind the scenes.

Jon Kec

And I imagine understanding that probably took a little bit of time, but has been hugely beneficial for you. 'cause you said you've been with the Ravens since 99, correct.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Yes.

Jon Kec

And how long with the Orioles?

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Um, well, I, I was with the, uh, buoy Base Socks, which is their Double A Team for 15 years before I got called up to the major. So

I spent a lot of time in the minors, but I, I did that because. I like working with athletes. I, I don't like baseball. I'm not, I'm not a, a baseball fan, but I love the mechanism and, and, and the biomechanics that are involved in throwing in, in, in hitting and running.

Um, so that kind of stuff is fun. And working in the minor leagues is a privilege because those guys don't get hands on them. As much as some of the big leaguers do.

So it's kind of fun to really help them, and then if you stick around long enough to see them make it to the next level.

Jon Kec

Yeah, so, so in all that time, in that progression through the minors, um, your time with the Ravens, I I think from what I've always understood is shelf life can be a bit short, right? If there's a, if there's a front office change, if there's a coaching staff change, you're probably getting changed out too, because everybody's got, their guy has

that teamwork mentality and understanding that been. Crucial to keeping you with these teams for so long? 'cause I feel like you're, you're kind of a unicorn in that sense, right? A lot of other providers don't make it 25, 26 years.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

No. Um, I, I, I tell a story how there's one team in the NFL, they went through five chiropractors in four years, so does that mean chiropractic doesn't work? Or perhaps the mentality of some of the chiropractors that were chosen?

Weren't the best fit for the team concept. So I've been through, um, two head coaches, two team owners, uh, and four heads of sports medicine.

And you're, you're exactly right. At any moment, you know, it was, some people say the NFL stands for not for long. You know, something can change.

Um. But, but it is having that ability to listen and communicate, uh, that can really help with longevity.

Jon Kec

Well, let's, uh, let's dive into kind of some of your, your life right now. Now, you mentioned things have kind of changed, right?

We we're now into the regular season, so it's, it's a little bit less volume maybe on the Raven side, but you still have the orial side of things to kind of think about.

What's a, a, normal week look like for you? Let's maybe say Ravens first. What's a normal week in training camp and what's your normal week now?

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Well, uh, I'll, I'll, I'll take, I'll take you through my week and I'll encompass all of it because, uh, we're also involved with the University of Maryland. So at the, at the University of Maryland, we are in the training room twice a week. In addition to covering, uh, home football games, um, football ball games, basketball, home games and basketball tournaments, as well as working with baseball, in addition to being in the main training room, treating all the athletes.

So we have, uh, an old school giant whiteboard, uh, between myself and my, the other doctors that I work with and let. Take a small step back here and say, I don't do anything myself. I, I am not the team chiropractor for the Baltimore Ravens there. Dr. David Ballinger is now, I think his 11th or 12th year. Um, I don't do anything myself with the Orioles here.

I have Dr. Sean Malloy and, uh, with the, with the University of Maryland, there's three or four of us. So, I, yeah. With, uh, Dr. Larry Plotkin and Dr. Moy. So we do things as a team because I, I, I have some very close friends in the NFL that they are the only guy, and it is, it could be a grind if you're at the facility two, three times a week, in addition to every single weekend, it's a grind.

Um. It. Baseball, uh, baseball, we cover every other home game. So, uh, that we do, we, we don't have to stay for the game. It's not like football, where football, if somebody gets hurt, we, we have to do everything we can to get them back on the field. Healthy and baseball, there's like 475 games a year or

Jon Kec

I think you're underselling it a bit. It's closer to a thousand.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Okay. Yeah. So, um. You know, it's more the performance enhancement before the game on a, on a regular basis, in addition to helping out when, when things do come up. Um, and then in the, in, in the training room. So, uh, there are slotted times that I'll go to work or one of us will go to work for two to three hours at a time, and then we're done e except for football games.

So in, in addition to that, like, um. Today I'm spending time with you. Um, midday I'm going to be treating patients, and at the end of the day I'll be working, um, with, uh, Baltimore Orioles.

So, uh, and then tomorrow, same kind of thing. I'll be seeing patients in the morning, then I'll go to a different place.

So it's, it's about, you know what, I, I don't get bored, right? It's it, and, and that's what's kept me. In the game. I, it, it, it's, there are people. That in, in our prof. I, it's, I found out it happens in a lot of professions, um, where they'll send letters to these individual teams and say, well, you know, I, uh, I know this technique and that technique, so I should be your team chiropractor.

But those people don't have the ability to communicate. And, um, it, it's just, it's just, I've been very fortunate to work with who I work with and it's been a fun ride.

Jon Kec

It's interesting kind of hearing you mention a lot of the other providers that are involved with everybody with the Orioles, with the Ravens, with the University of Maryland. Um, you know, very, very, very brief piece of my background. When I first got started, I actually was in the office working with a provider who was one of two.

Team chiros for an NFL team. Um, very different roles. Like the guy I worked for was strictly kind of, I think, more in your realm, sports performance, soft tissue related. The other provider was their adjusting guy for the most part. Um, but in the other experiences talking with other providers, I don't hear quite the same team mentality.

I'm hearing on your end, I'm hearing more of the, the single doc doing it all. And I, I've, I've heard from a lot of them how much strain that's put on. Their personal practice.

So what's a normal week look like for you?

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Yeah, so, so it, it, it kind of does a really funky cycle. The, the, the wacky months are typically March and, uh, August. So

Mar. Taking th those months, there's always something, right? Because now I'm involved in, in all these sports, but like some of the lighter months are usually, um, July. So I, I, I can't give you what that number is.

It would depend on the week if there, if there's a basketball game. Basketball games are at night typically, so, you know, I could see patients during the day and then I'm driving to College Park. And, uh, we, uh, arrive two hours before every game. So if it's a seven o'clock game, I'm there at five fighting DC traffic.

So we know we gotta add in the traffic factor. Um, and then usually stay till halftime, clear the training room, and then, you know, and then I'm back home. So

it, it could really wax and wane and then marches. A crazy month. You know, we do our professional Football chiropractic society conference usually the last weekend of February, 1st of March, which is a wonderful, wonderful event.

You, you know, you ought to come out and do a live podcast there.

That would be cool 'cause N-C-M-I-C has been a great supporter of this event and great, even a better, because we have so many. Um, students that, that want to get involved and have that passion for sports, right? If, if you're a chiropractor, you're a little whacked anyway, but if you're a sports chiropractor, you're, you're over the edge in, in that drive and that, that commitment thing.

So, so we have that at the beginning, and then, oh, by the way, it's March Madness. And then, oh, by the way, so basketball got come and go and then, oh, by the way, it's spring training, so then, you know, it's off to Florida. It, it's, it, it varies. But, but again, don't get bored.

Jon Kec

No, I don't think you have time to be bored. No. No matter what you tried to do, you couldn't become bored, but

Okay.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

The only other part that I wanna leave in this, so that, that's a pie that gets sliced up

right where. Sports chiropractors can fail, is where they don't leave a slice of the pie for themselves and a slice of the pie for their family. And it's so important to not lose sight of those things.

Um, I, I, I have my, my youngest daughter is just finishing her last year. At the Naval Academy and, um, she played soccer. So, you know, when the football schedule comes out, I put down the Navy women's soccer schedule first, and then I lay football and baseball over that and carve out. So in addition to that pie that I showed you, it's, it's all got you got to keep the balance.

Jon Kec

Yeah, well, congrats on that. Upcoming graduation. I'm sure she's excited. And from, from the Naval Academy, no less. Definitely not a, uh, an easy school to get into regardless of what brings you there.

So congratulations. I'm sure you're a proud father.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

I'm very proud. So, so here comes the marketing class, right? So you're right, there's that whole academic side and the whole communication side. Where do you start? You start right in your

clinic. You start, I ask my patients, you know, not, not just their family history, but I'll ask their social history. I you would be, you would be.

But many people would be surprised how many of their patients are coaches. They coach their kids. They, they may have coached whoever. Um, they may be on the board of one of these recreational leagues. Look, one of my passions now. Is I am all about teaching, um, the importance of emergency action plans. Not, not, not saying that I, I am certainly not the E-M-T-E-M-S expert on it, but I, people don't realize, for example, um, I, I did a speaking gig in Oklahoma.

Only 25% of of high schools in Oklahoma have athletic trainers. Like what? Let's, let's like send your kid swimming with no lifeguard, you know, at all these different events. Even here in Baltimore, there was one athletic trainer for nine high schools when we first started this organization called Bash, uh, Baltimore Area Sports Health Initiative, uh, with Colin Francis, who at the time was an athletic trainer.

With the Baltimore Ravens and now he's with Howard University. He had the vision of we need more athletic trainers. So I got involved with that and we raised enough funds and matching funds to now every school in Baltimore City has an athletic trainer, so. I, I look for opportunities and communication.

So in your practice, who do you know? What are they doing? What are, what are they doing on the side? Can you get involved in teaching things? Now, again, staying in your lane if you're comfortable about speaking about concussion, speak about that. If you're comfortable about talking about how to run a practice, speak about that.

Don't walk in and say, well, I, I'm a chiropractor, and, and send me your dinged kids because.

What, what kind of, what kind of service is that besides being self-service? So it, it's a small seed to plant in the community, and guess what? These kids grow up and these, when I do a lecture somewhere, the first thing I do is I thank the audience because they're the ones taking care of the kids at young ages.

When they get to high school, they're still under care. When they get to college, they're, they're asking the athletic trainer, Hey, who's your team chiropractor? When did they come in? And that got jobs for a lot of people. And then when they get to the next level and they get to me and they say, well, where's the chiropractor?

Like, Hey, what's up?

Jon Kec

Well, I think that's a huge piece, right, too, is that, is that life balance.

I, I think it's very easy to lose ourselves in our, in our. Private practice, let alone stacking all these other things on top of it. People looking to get involved, students, right? Sports, chiropractic, professional teams, colleges, whatever it may be. What are some suggestions you'd make to them?

Where do they start? I know we talked a little bit about designations and letters after your name, but more so the, the information education that comes from that, but beyond just getting some

additional training beyond. Getting themselves involved at the community level that we've already talked about, what kind of things can people try to do to best set themselves up for success in the

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Right, It's there. There's our services are being asked for at every level because of the work that people are doing at the the rec league level. So I love. And how do you get involved? How do you plant a seed? It's at the rec level, at the local level, because who's taking care of those people?

The other thing that I just said to stay in your lane if you are not comfortable, um, I and I, I have so many stories that, you know, I had an old associate that. Um, wanted to be the team chiropractor for this local high school. His friend was the coach. Um, and he said, yeah, I'm gonna go work with them. I said, well, when are you gonna work with them?

You know, they practice after school and that's usually when we're busy here and, uh, are you gonna miss patients here? And then I said, well, what if someone goes down? Are you trained enough to, uh, triage that person? Do you know? And then, um. So he was like, yeah, maybe I won't do that. So year, years go by and he goes to a game and he's sitting in the stands with his wife and, uh, his friend's coach.

He say, Hey, come on down on the field. So he comes down on the field. Sure enough, a kid from the other team goes down and there was no EMS and they started yelling, doctor, doctor. And he is like, wait, you talking to me? So, so he runs out. Onto the field. And the only thing that saved him is the other team had an athletic trainer that was trained to be able to triage that event and knew an emergency action plan so that person could be transported to where they needed to be.

Um, so it, it, it's, it's grassroots people. Need sports-minded chiropractors, and you don't have to have letters after your, you know, half of the guys in the NFL don't have postgraduate letters after their name.

So it's it's not about that. It's gaining experience, gaining knowledge, and having the ability to communicate things.

You learn at the rec level, grow as you grow.

Jon Kec

And I think I wanna, you know, ask a question I think I know the answer to, but I wanna make sure everybody listening is clear. When you're talking about your early time at the community level, working at the rec level, even at the IOC, um, those weren't paid positions.

People look for that immediate payoff and I, I think that they need to realize that that's not always gonna be the case, right? You've gotta be giving of your time in the beginning

to get to the next step.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Yeah, so I, I I, I also do another class I, I, it's called, show Me the Money, the business side of Sports Chiropractic, like how to get paid. I am a huge, I, I am a huge fan. A huge preacher of the days of chiropractors doing stuff for free are over like. There is no reason why. Well, I want to do this to show the benefit of chiropractic care and save the world one spot.

No, that's over. We've done that. All people before me have done that. That groundwork is late. However, when it comes to rec leagues, if you're doing it and it can help your practice, great. If you're doing it, 'cause your kid's part of the team and you really give a. Darn about the health and wellbeing of those kids, then do it.

But don't take on jobs where you're not gonna be reimbursed for what you do. Don't take on risks. Don't think that if you're working for a college and you just wanna do this for free. To get your foot in the door. If you don't think one of those NIL athletes are gonna come after you because you allegedly made a mistake and you say, well, well wait, I didn't charge for it.

So we're all good here, right? No, that's not, that's that's not real. You, you need to have yourself covered NCMIC. You need to know the rules.

You know, sports chiropractic too, especially now, we spent, uh, with Dr. Jay Greenstein, we, in 2018, we last minute opened the door for chiropractors to be involved in the travel to treat rules or, or we would have nothing.

Um, and NCMIC makes it very easy. So if you're involved with a team, please make sure you're covering yourself in, in all as I, I didn't mean to make a little commercial

announcement there, but,

Jon Kec

You're speaking from experience,

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

This, is part of it. And, and because sometimes we could be blinded by, oh, I get to do all this and this and this, but what are you getting in return?

And sometimes it could be tickets, but does that really help? Does sometimes it could be a banner in a building. Well, if there's only 30 people in that building, does, does that really help? What? What is a fair. Deal, and I think it was Chris Voss that said, no deal is better than a bad deal and it's not worth it to get involved in sports things that aren't worth it.

Jon Kec

Sure. So just, just to be clear on that, 'cause we started talking about, you know, maybe not being reimbursed. We're talking about not being directly paid, but figuring out what the other benefit to you, your practice and your future plans are. Right?

Is it a marketing opportunity? Is it a practice building event?

Is it experience? But, but don't just give away service without having that understanding of why am I doing this?

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Right. And, and yes. And especially with organizations that can quote unquote, afford to reimburse you for your talents and for your skills. And yes, if you say no, sure they'll find some other Yahoo that could do it, but can, can they do it as good as you?

Are they documenting what they do as good as you?

Are they as reliable? Do they show up on time? Do they, there are so, there are so many layers to getting involved. And why that one team went through five chiropractors in four years.

Jon Kec

Yeah.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

And, and, and actually those things I was friends with the head athletic trainer, and that's kind of the basis of a lot of what I teach were, were the mistakes that people made within our profession.

That to you and I may seem, oh, why would he do that, um, is not so obvious to everybody. And then

the, the, the one thing that we, we have to mention, um, is it's a commitment. Right. It's, it's, it's, it's a, it's a commitment and you need to be committed to following the rules of the game that you're getting involved with.

'cause you're not only representing yourself, your practice, your family, you're representing the profession.

And, and, and I think what we, it's a really funky phase and I don't know what COVID had to do with it, but there's kind of a resurgence of. Getting back to recommitting to, if this is what you wanna do, you've gotta know what, what the time commitment is.

What the financial commitment is. Um, so it's, it, it, it's, I I, I tell people there's no better time than now to be a sports chiropractor. It, there's just a ton of opportunities.

Jon Kec: Thank you for, again, exceptionally busy part of your, uh, your year and sharing some stories, some knowledge, some, some hopefully, uh, changes that people can make to try to get themselves moving in the, the direction of sports chiropractic. Just all in all, thank you so much for all the conversation today. I appreciate your time.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Thank you. I, I enjoyed it anytime.

Jon Kec

Absolutely. Well, I hope to see you again, uh, maybe at in march at the, uh, the convention, but.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Oh my gosh. I Is it No lie. You have got to come. If you, our, our conference is like, is, it's like where, where chiropractic meets Oprah, where, where like we're, we're giving away all kinds of money and scholarships and we have the best vendors and the best sponsors. And you guys, like I said, I, I, I don't even how many hundreds of dollars you guys give.

To just help these kids. It, it, it's, it's, it's fun.

Jon Kec

Do you know, uh, is, is the the weekend set yet for next year?

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

It is the, um, 27th and 20. 8th of February at the, um, in Indianapolis at the Hyatt. Uh, if you check out the PFCS, the Professional Football Chiropractic Society Register, get a hotel room 'cause it's during the NFL combine, so anybody in everybody is taking up rooms there.

That's the first thing you need to do. Get your flights, drive, walk, whatever it takes to get there, and it sells out fast.

Jon Kec

Perfect. Well, we'll have links for the, uh, the event, the PFCS in general, um, in our notes too, for anybody that's interested.

So we'll have a lot of information for you.

but Awesome. Well, Dr. Sok, again, thank you for the time. Have a, uh, fantastic rest of your week and a wonderful football season.

Dr. Alan Sokoloff

Thank you, man. Be well.

Jon Kec

Thanks again, Dr. Sokoloff, for joining us and giving us a behind the scenes look at chiropractic in the NFL. For our listeners, everything we talked about today for the PFCS will be linked in our show notes. Remember, like we discussed, the skills you're building now can open the doors in all kinds of settings. Make sure to subscribe to chiropractic so you don't miss our next episode, and hey.

Please tell a colleague or two about us. If there's anything we can do for you, do not hesitate to reach out to us at Askncmic@ncmic.com. We're always here for questions, show ideas, or really just anything you wanna tell us. And remember, you can watch the video edition of Chiropractic on the NCMIC YouTube channel.

Thanks again everybody. I'm Jon Kec, and this has been Chiropractical.