

~~being sensitive to their vulnerability and their need to regain confidence is imperative. I cannot stress enough the importance of framing sessions in a positive and supportive way. The language we choose to communicate with clients has the potential for elevating or lowering the expectations of the athlete — in fact any client — as to a positive and successful outcome from Rolwing SI.~~

**Conclusion**

~~Our role as Rolfers is to provide our clients the opportunity to function with the fullest potential possible. Our corrective measures to repair injuries and to maximize physical performance empower clients of all walks of life to exceed their own expectations. For the athlete clients, our recognition of the particulars of their sports, training regimens, and competitive needs is essential for rebuilding trust and confidence that they will again compete at a desired performance level, or greater.~~

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# Lessons in the Body's Potential

## *Working with One of the NFL's Greatest Running Backs*

By Wayne and Sandy Henningsgaard, Certified Advanced Rolfers™



Wayne and Sandy Henningsgaard with Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson

**Wayne's Perspective**

Sandy and I have worked with many great Minnesota Vikings and other National Football League (NFL) players over twenty-three years, including Cris Carter, who was recently inducted into the Hall of Fame, and Vikings running back Adrian Peterson. Adrian has had a total of 10,115 rushing yards in the NFL and eighty-six touchdowns. In the season after his anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and medial cruciate ligament (MCL) tears, he completed 2,097 yards – just eight yards shy of the all-time record – and was named Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the year by the NFL.

We started to work with Adrian in 2008, which was his second season in the NFL playing with the Vikings. To our recollection, he never missed his weekly session during the season. At the end of the 2011 season, he took a hit to his left knee that tore both his ACL and MCL. Before Adrian, no running back had ever come back from this kind of injury to a successful season. I had read as much in the newspaper, but I spoke to Adrian about this and, while he was sure that no one had ever had a good next season, he questioned

the sportswriter's facts. Not only did Adrian last the entire season after his injury, but he also gained the second-highest yardage ever gained by a running back.

Here is Adrian perspective about his Rolwing® Structural Integration (SI) sessions:

I started to see Wayne and Sandy for Rolwing [sessions] in 2008, which was my second year playing for the Minnesota Vikings. I did not know what to expect, but I wanted to get my body open and loose so I could function better. I had heard how Rolwing [SI] helped with minor injuries, so I tried it. I soon found that of the many different angles out there such as stretching and deep-tissue work, Rolwing [SI] is the best for getting my body rejuvenated. What I thought were ankle sprains and pulled muscles such as groin and hamstrings were instead just resolved immediately in my Rolwing sessions. These injuries were not as the trainers said . . . instead I felt like brand new as Rolwing [SI] had resolved [them]. On a game-by-game basis, by getting back my flexibility in my hips, I always feel much better. Rolwing [SI] has become a confidence builder as it keeps my body durable during the season. It has played a big role in my recovery time and making it through the season. I have learned how my muscles connect, as I could never have imagined. I have learned how to access my core muscles better as Wayne and Sandy have pointed out these things to me in the sessions.

At the end of the 2011 season I took a hit that tore the anterior and medial cruciate ligaments in my left knee. Rolwing [SI] played a big role in my recovery. It helped my left knee strengthen and my right leg become less dominant. It played a

tremendous role in getting back my flexibility and strength in my left leg. I credit Rolwing [SI] with helping me to recover for the 2012 season. Several games into the 2012 season, Wayne and Sandy were able to resolve a sprain in my ankle that was slowing me down. I went from 90% to 100%: an extra kick burst of speed. I was on my way to a 2097-yard comeback season. With four games left in the season, I suffered a sports hernia injury that would not let my left groin fully recover. Rolwing [SI] helped me to maintain my body at 90%, and I had a good finish to the season. I had sports hernia surgery after the season.

I had great Rolwing sessions with Wayne and Sandy last season but again suffered the same injury at the end of the season. I continue to work with Wayne and Sandy to recover for next season. [Editor's note: This was written before the start of the 2014 NFL season.]

Dr. Rolf started her book *Rolwing: Reestablishing the Natural Alignment and Structural Integration of the Human Body for Vitality and Well-being* with the preface "Literal Thorns in Literal Flesh." The level that Sandy and I work with when we work with Adrian is energy and vitality. This is a step above the other athletes, who are themselves performing a step above the average person. On page sixteen of her book, Rolf writes:

Form and function are a unity, two sides of one coin. In order to enhance function, appropriate form must exist or be created. A joyous radiance of health is attained only as the body conforms more nearly to its inherent pattern. This pattern, this form, this Platonic idea, is the blueprint for structure. In turn, the function of this more appropriate structure is vitality of a degree unknown to the average person.

When we work with Adrian we are working with an individual who is embodying more perfectly than most this inherent pattern. We need to promote literal change in the literal flesh to help him with his injuries, strength, speed, and agility. As with all our clients, we find 'thorns in the flesh' that contribute to chronic issues. Watch Adrian on the football field as he goes toe

to toe with other great athletes trying to stop him from moving the ball forward to get a glimpse of this inherent pattern and its potential in all of us.

Just as Adrian works extremely hard as an athlete, we do not kid ourselves that moving toward this inherent pattern is easy. Sandy and I are good examples of what it takes the average person to assist in the removal of 'thorns in the flesh'. In order to keep our own fascia soft and flexible, we have eliminated all grains of any kind in our diet, especially gluten, and stopped eating sugar and dairy. We have never had one client who did not soften his or her connective tissue and reduce inflammation when doing this. We believe that most of the pain endured in Rolwing SI is caused by the above. We also consume alkaline fluids to increase the pH of our bodies, which also seems to reduce inflammation. Using functional, natural medicine, we have restored our adrenal function and healed our guts. We have also cleared bacteria, viruses, mold, and fungus, which, in our view, all can restrict the fascia. Last, we regularly exercise to maintain the flexibility of the fascia.

When we take this approach, we reach the goal that we set to carry the work into the facial layers connecting bones and covering organs in order to restore spatial relationship and internal motion to these two primary energy systems of the body. This is a natural extension of the holism of Rolwing SI. The goal is to restore position, mobility, and motility to these systems. We determine this by sensing an improvement in energy flow through skeletal or organ systems as we evaluate the superficial to deeper levels of energy flow in each. The key to this work is that whenever this cannot be restored and maintained, we must work in the myofascial system enwrapping the muscle that is then restricting the change we are looking for. Therefore, in basic Ten Series work, we work from the outside in, and as we develop and integrate more knowledge in and into Rolwing SI, we work from the inside out.

Let us again be clear that by quoting Rolf we are not referring to any kind of mental image or system of thought such as the Platonic. We are referring to an expansion of our awareness. Every time we do a Ten Series we are encouraging ourselves and our clients to expand the sense of who we are, to go beyond the sense of an ego encased in a mind and body, and to

go into an expanded awareness of self – encompassing body, mind, earth, and cosmos. What we advocate is the turning of our attention inward toward the body as the ligamentous and skeletal energy systems are addressed in Rolwing SI and in individual work such as yoga. It is here that we have discovered the universal nature of mind, body, and the gravity field. Here fascia becomes structure and structure becomes energy in the spiral nature of the universe. Here the 'Line' is an axis in the body that aligns with the rotation of the earth on its axis, the axis created as the earth rotates around the sun, and the axis created as the sun rotates around the center of the galaxy. As we sense and feel ourselves down to the bones, we perceive ourselves to be structures of energy and motion in the gravity field. The straight lines of thought give way to the spiral lines of motion. We can learn to perceive our structure as the energy of motion in a joyful, happy, and relaxed attitude of living.

### Sandy's Perspective

Wayne is so graceful in his thought process, how do I follow that? Let me just say that the first time I saw Adrian in person, I looked at his body and thought, "Wow. How do I improve on *that*?" The man has a really balanced body. The way the Mona Lisa is a balanced painting of a woman, Adrian's body is balanced. You can see that he is a strong individual with powerful thighs and arms the size of a small woman's waist. Just go to YouTube, search "Adrian Peterson," and look at the highlights. You will see the strength of an elephant, the speed of a gazelle, and a grace that is multidimensional.

That injury that Adrian had to his left knee was fascinating to work with. Scar tissue was everywhere. Strain lines went up and down the leg, both in the back and the front of the leg and through his adductors. I saw Wayne work on all sides of his patella – front, back, left, right, top, and bottom, as well as underneath it. And he did not give up until he had that thing free as a feather and floating.

When Adrian's hamstrings were tight and wouldn't let go, we both worked on the leg. I would hold it in every position you can think of and Wayne would work away: leg elevated and abducted; leg elevated, rotated, and abducted; and leg elevated and abducted with the knee straight or flexed. Sometimes I wondered how long Adrian could "breathe deeply and keep

[his] attention in [his] heart," as I was directing him.

I thank my lucky stars to have had the opportunity to work with Adrian. When you work with someone for years and years, you know their spirit. Adrian is a man of

high integrity and sweetness. Never fails that he gives me a peck on the forehead when he comes for a session. Never fails that he gives both of us a hug on his way out of the door. And also never fails that he says "God bless" as he leaves.

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## Athletic Legends and the Power of Rolfing® SI

By Robert Toporek, Certified Advanced Rolfer™

The octogenarian body under my hands was broken and distorted by five decades of professional abuse. It also belonged to a Canadian icon. Gordie Howe is the Babe Ruth of professional hockey. "Mr. Hockey" (the nickname by which he is still known and to which he holds a trademark) was the all-time leading scorer in the National Hockey League (NHL) for almost three decades before Wayne Gretzky finally broke his record in 1989. And now he was in my humble Audubon, Pennsylvania office, undergoing his first Rolfing Structural Integration (SI) session at the urging of his son, Mark Howe, a Hall of Fame ice hockey player in his own right. Mark had learned first hand what Rolfing SI could do for him, and was hopeful it would help his father.

The elder Howe was still a big man, and still built like a rock. He had played most of his career without a helmet. During the 1950 playoffs, he suffered a skull fracture severe enough to require emergency surgery. He won the league's scoring title the following year. He broke his arm several times. His artificial knees clicked when he wiggled his legs. Yet Mr. Hockey was reluctant to begin Rolfing sessions. He'd never liked massage.

The first athlete of note that I worked on was Baltimore Colts great Alan Ameche, known to National Football League (NFL) fans of the era as "The Iron Horse." I have no idea how he found me, but as a huge sports fan, I was pretty intimidated by the prospect of using my hands to help repair his body. That changed once we were in the Rolfing room. He was no longer a sports legend; he was a client who was in pain and needed my help. Ameche's body was a bunch of knots, as though he'd just returned from a visit to the 19th century, where he'd been badly beaten in a bareknuckle boxing match. We got to work. Ameche attended all ten Rolfing

sessions, and afterwards he was standing straighter, had recovered much of his lost flexibility, and was extremely appreciative. The following summer he had the four advanced sessions I learned from Dr. Rolf.

I found most of my later athletic clients through old-fashioned networking. One of my clients was the bookkeeper for a famous South Philadelphia restaurant, The Saloon, which was a haunt for many local sports figures. She spoke of being friends with Dick Vermeil, then head coach of the Philadelphia Eagles. I asked to be introduced, and she obliged. Before I knew it, I was sitting at a bar with Vermeil, telling him about Rolfing SI and how I believed an ongoing Rolfing regimen would better allow his squad to weather the physical demands of the full NFL season. Vermeil

was intrigued enough to introduce me to the Eagles organization.

My subsequent meeting with the Eagles' head trainer didn't go as well. He was skeptical of Rolfing SI and clearly felt as though I was invading his territory—which at the time, due to my excitement, I failed to notice. When I finally got to do a couple of Rolfing sessions on a player who had suffered a pulled hamstring, the trainer prematurely sent him back out on the field for a full workout. He reinjured his hamstring, and I received the blame. Thus ended my brief career thus far as an assistant NFL trainer.

It was not, however, my final Rolfing session with members of the Philadelphia Eagles. Irving Fryar, Keith Byars, and Jon Runyan—the latter now a former U.S. congressman—all completed successful courses of Rolfing SI with me. Some, like Fryar, had me visit their homes and even work on members of their families. In many cases, I offered them free sessions in exchange for lifetime endorsement rights. The one thing that stands out in my work with athletes is

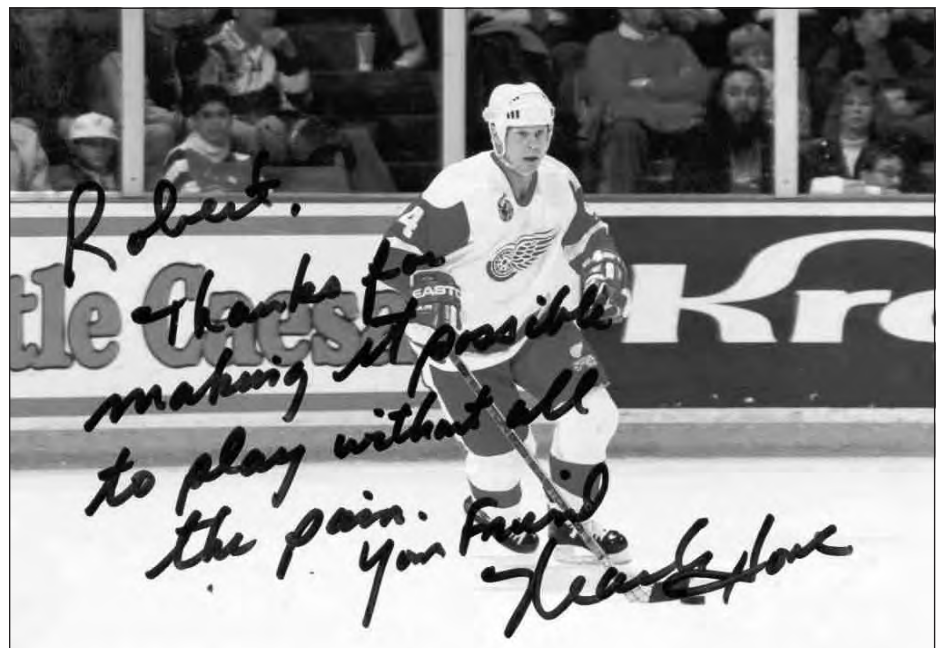


Figure 1. Mark Howe playing for the Philadelphia Flyers.