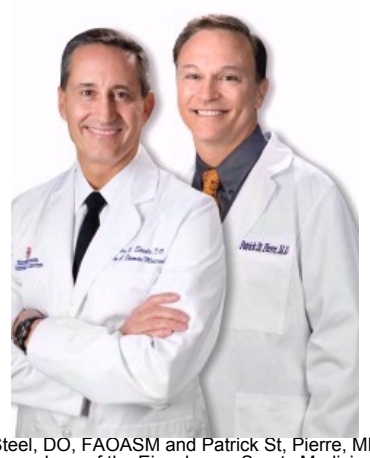
Eisenhower Orthopedic Physicians Serve It Up For The Pros



The Eisenhower Dream Team - LEFT TO RIGHT: Stephen R. Steel, DO, FAOASM and Patrick St, Pierre, MD, FAAOS. Not pictured: Euthym Kontaxis, MD, FACEP, FAAP.

Following a successful inaugural year of medical management,members of the Eisenhower Sports Medicine Program will again provide 24-hour comprehensive medical care to the professional athletes of the BNP Paribas Open,March 7 to 20 in Indian Wells.One of the most attended tennis tournaments in the world outside of the Grand Slams, the event draws nearly 350,000 people and has attracted hundreds of the top men's and women's tennis stars. Patrick St. Pierre,MD,Director of Sports Medicine and Orthopedic Research at Eisenhower Desert Orthopedic Center (EDOC), leads the team of Eisenhower physicians at the event along with Eisenhower's Stephen Steele,DO, head Primary Care physician for the tournament, Medical Director, Eisenhower Primary Care 365, and a past President of Eisenhower Medical Staff. The BNP Paribas is one of the few major events combining both men and women athletes over a two-week period. Both physicians work alongside the ATP™ (Association of Tennis Professionals) World Tour and Sony Ericsson WTA (Women's Tennis Association) Tour trainers. Eisenhower's Euthym Kontaxis,MD,Medical Director of the Tennity Emergency Department, directs emergency services for the event and also helps with care of the athletes. Several other physicians from EDOC and Eisenhower Medical Center, as well as health care providers from around the Valley, assist as consultants when specialized treatment is needed.

The Eisenhower team has an examination room in between the men's and women's locker rooms at the state-of-the-art Indian Wells Tennis Garden facility."We get to meet the trainers each year, and often they are the same from year to year," shares Dr. St. Pierre."Our consistent presence helps build confidence and security for the players. They like seeing the same faces and knowing they are receiving expert treatment — because if they get injured, it can affect their livelihood."
"Last year, a player was able to play for several more rounds because of injections provided by Dr. St. Pierre. "It allowed him to practice and play," shares Dr. St. Pierre, "and he ended up upsetting a higher ranked player.""

Over the event's two-week run, the physicians see and treat a myriad of injuries and illnesses."The tennis athlete in general isincredibly conditioned. Still, they are susceptible to overuse injuries," explains Dr. St. Pierre, noting that they can provide injections for players who are suffering from these types injuries.

"We do injections into areas that surround joints or tendons," explains Dr. St. Pierre."There are certain areas that we can inject with a local anesthetic or cortisone without putting the athlete at risk." Last year, a player was able to play for several more rounds because of injections provided by Dr. St. Pierre."It allowed him to practice and play," shares Dr. St. Pierre,"and he ended up upsetting a higher ranked player."

The physicians also used a new procedure to treat a player with an Achilles heal injury."We used platelet rich plasma to encourage healing," relates Dr. St. Pierre."Platelet rich plasma has been used successfully on a number of professional athletes. It is a process where we draw blood from a player, and spin it in a centrifuge to separate the platelets from the red and white blood cells. Platelets are usually known for clotting, but also within platelets are a lot of growth factors which are helpful for healing soft tissues,"Dr. St. Pierre explains.

The physicians also treat a wide variety of medical illnesses during the event. "These athletes are traveling regularly and going from country to country. They often have bacterial or viral illnesses they're trying to play through, so we help them with antibiotics and different treatments," says Dr. St. Pierre."One player from last year's tour had a serious kidney ailment. We were able to get MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] scans and intricate lab studies to make sure they were safe and not going to injure themselves in the heat."

Dr. St. Pierre is excited to have the Eisenhower George and Julia Argyros Health Center just a mile from the tennis garden this year."We have offices there now, so we have the ability to get players right across the street for X-rays, lab testing, MRIs or anything they need," smiles St. Pierre.

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