

## New Jersey Athletics Congress

# NEWSLETTER

Spring 1992

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Volume 2, Issue 1

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## Readers Ask Questions About Ball Of The Foot Pain

### FootFacts

by

Dr. Richard Braver

Sports Medicine Chairman

*Dear Dr. Braver:* Ever since training for the New York City Marathon I have had pain to the ball of my foot. I was diagnosed with inflammation of the metatarsal joints where they articulate with the toes. I have greatly reduced my mileage, but the pain is still present during short runs. Please help me. — *Judy D.*

*Dear Judy:* Inflammation of the ball of the foot is a very common finding in athletes. Some physicians refer to this as a metatarsalgia (metatarsal pain), capsulitis (inflammation of the joint capsule), or a metatarsal bursitis (inflammation of a fluid-filled area underneath the metatarsal bones).

There are several options to evaluate.

1. Look at your foot type. A high arched foot has an increased downward angulation of the metatarsal bones (those closest to the toes), which are more susceptible to impact forces during push off. Look for a shoe with increased forefoot padding and/or shock absorbing materials. Also, an orthodic support may be utilized.

2. You should also evaluate the contour of the distal end of the foot—the toes. Should there be a longer second toe, then increased pressures are exerted to the longer bone during push off. If the metatarsal bones/toes are of

similar length yet there is still pain directly under one of the metatarsal bones, a dropped metatarsal may exist. This may be confirmed by special weight bearing x-ray views.

For these problems you may place a felt pad underneath the ball of the foot and cut a “U” shaped hole in the pad to “float” the painful metatarsal bone or have an orthodic fabricated to include a depression underneath the bone.

3. You should look at your running technique and, if necessary, improve the way you land and push off. If the feet are out-toed an excessive amount, there is an increased tendency for the foot to roll inward with the arch collapsing. This increases pressures to the more medial metatarsal bones.

4. Treatment should include the use of ice several times a day for approximately 15 minutes. Should the pains still exist, you should seek proper medical attention. My advice is to start with the simple treatment methods just outlined and, should pains continue, seek proper medical attention.

*Dr. Braver is a former 3:51 1500 meter runner and is the Sports Podiatric Physician for all teams at FDU and the NJ-TAC Sports Medicine Committee Chairman. He works out of Foot-Wise Podiatry & Sports Medicine Center, 140 Grand Ave. Englewood, NJ. (201)569-7672.*