

# Globe Sports

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## Lemieux has faith in healer

Montreal man's treatment of back ailments led four baseball players to invest in firm

BY DAVID NAYLOR, MONTREAL

When Mario Lemieux began his National Hockey League comeback this past season, it took slightly more than two months before his troubled back caused him to sit out his first game.

Back pain had driven Lemieux from the NHL once before, and it seemed it might just do it again.

But in mid-February, Lemieux was paid a visit by Sylvain Guimond, who trained in biomechanics at McGill University in Montreal and has helped many athletes overcome difficult back problems.

Within 15 minutes of seeing the hockey superstar, Guimond believed he'd found Lemieux's problem: one side of his hips was higher than the other.

Guimond told Lemieux that the condition, which he was able to detect using a computer program, caused Lemieux to have a displaced centre of gravity that was putting extra compression on his back.

"We knew that his muscles were not in balance and we knew there was way too much compression force on his back," Guimond said. "We knew he needed to stretch some muscles and strengthen others."

Guimond gave Lemieux a series of exercises that he said would help Lemieux improve his posture and complete the season without further problems.

When Lemieux came to Montreal with the Pittsburgh Penguins for a game against the Canadiens at the end of February, he spent the night before the game working with Guimond on techniques he'd been shown during their first session.

"Two weeks later, I was pain-free for the first time in 15 years," said Lemieux, who didn't miss a game because of back pain beyond the first week of March. "It's been four months since that time and I've had no back problems. Every day that I get up, I think it's quite amazing to find something so simple."

tonix, is the product of research he began a decade ago while working with many of Quebec's top speed skaters. The skaters, because they race in only one direction, suffered from repetitive injuries on the same side of their bodies and uneven muscle development that altered their centre of gravity and produced back pain.

Guimond theorized that a person's displaced centre of gravity causes him or her to be isometric instead of balanced. Problems then occur when the muscles in the back or other parts of the body are used to compensate for this.

"I said if it's true for the skaters, it's true for anyone," he said.

Therefore, he decided, only by measuring a person's biomechanics can one properly prescribe an exercise remedy that will recreate a balance and symmetry of muscles, restore a proper centre of gravity and alleviate pain or prevent injury.

"I found that most practitioners when they prescribe remedy for the back, they photocopy sheets, so that everyone goes out with the same exercises," Guimond said. "I said to myself, 'That doesn't make sense, because none of us have the same biomechanics.'"

"Most evaluations that are done are very subjective. So I came up with the idea of a biomechanical analysis in the static position."

The most recent version of Guimond's system uses a World Wide Web-based program to take an exact measurement of an individual's biomechanics. Thirty-two markers are placed on the body and then three photographs are taken, which are immediately analyzed by the Biotonix software.

Guimond's system, which can diagnose 2.4 million posture variables and prescribe from 600 different exercises, is available across North America over the Internet to doctors, physiotherapists, chiropractors and other health professionals.



### Loria orders payroll to be dumped

INSIDE BASEBALL, S2



## Germany 4, Canada 0

Selim Teber (front) of Canada clashes with Germany's Benjamin Auer yesterday in Co during their game in the world youth soccer championship. Canada's faint hopes of su

ANTONIO

# Montrealer relieves back ailments

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Lemieux may be the highest-profile professional athlete to use Biotonix, but he's far from the first. In the hallway of the company's downtown Montreal office are dozens of portraits, many with personal messages to Guimond from athletes he has helped.

One is Paul Byrd, the major-league pitcher now with the Kansas City Royals, who was referred to Guimond by Atlanta Braves pitcher John Smoltz.

"Paul Byrd called me [in 1999] and said I'm in Montreal today and John [Smoltz] said I have to see you," Guimond said. "He said as soon as I pitch two or three innings,

I'm done."

Byrd's photo in Biotonix gallery shows him completing his delivery of a pitch and bears the caption, "Sylvain, look! I can bend my back!"

Smoltz is one of four current and former Atlanta Braves who became investors in the company during the summer of 1999. Guimond's system was recommended to the four by doctors who met Guimond when he spoke to 1,500 sports medicine professionals at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. Leading up to the Games, Guimond worked with some of Quebec's top athletes.

The four Braves were so impressed with Guimond's system that they each asked whether they could invest in his product when

the team visited Toronto in the summer of 1999.

Smoltz, Tony Grafino, now with the Chicago White Sox, Keith Lockhart and retired shortstop Walt Weiss are Biotonix shareholders.

"I'd been introduced to it because I'd had some problems with my hamstring," Lockhart said. "I liked that it could tell me why I was having hamstring problems.

"In this business, they're trained to just treat the injury, but this gets down to the root of the problem. If your hips are out of line and your hamstring is being stretched, you're going to have an injury eventually. Right now there's no action unless there's an injury. And if there's no pain, they think you're okay."

Biotonix has also grabbed the attention of the Montreal Canadiens, who, after two years of being ravaged by injuries, are trying to learn whatever they can about what causes them.

Montreal's team physician, David Mulder, has been working with the Biotonix product as part of research being done by the Canadiens and McGill University into the cause of injury to the stomach wall, back and groin.

"We're just getting to know it in terms of a tool to help us do our job, but we're quite excited about it as a measuring device," Mulder said.

"All these things are going to be available to study by something

more objective than what we've had before."

The Canadiens have used Biotonix on several players and most recently used it to evaluate each of the top prospects for this year's entry draft, which will be held this weekend.

Mulder said they now want to study whether posture problems detected by Biotonix lead to injuries.

"I think everyone will want to use it, but what we're trying to do is put some science to it," he said. "Until we get proper science to this, it will be difficult to sell worldwide. But if you can show a scientific benefit, it will help us put this in its proper place."