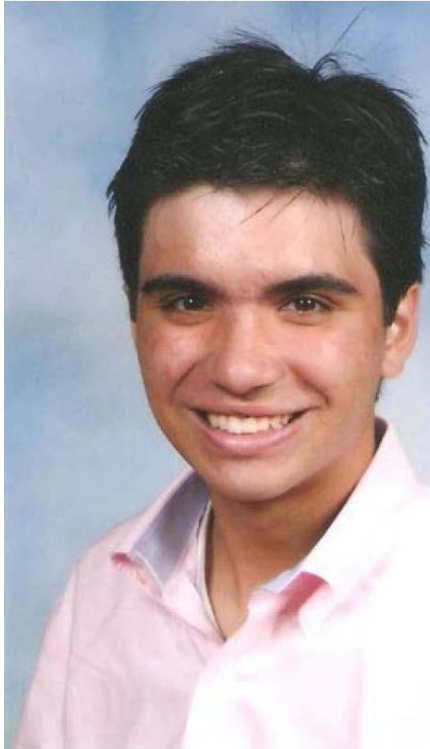




YOUNG VOICES: He's the Chicago Bulls' point man for medical care



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People consider professional sports a type of entertainment, a diversion from the serious work we do.

I openly confess that I am a professional sports fan, especially when it comes to our own Chicago Bulls. The point of divergence between myself and many other sports fans, however, lies in my curiosity regarding the intensely academic aspects of working with superior athletes.

People make it their goal in life to have something meaningful “after the comma.”

- George Washington, America’s first president.
- Pablo Picasso, creative genius.
- Warren Buffett, business magnate.

Dr. Brian Cole, chosen as one of the “Best Doctors in America” each year since 2004, “Chicago’s Top Doctor” in 2006, and “NBA Team Physician of the Year” for 2009, has become content with flying under the radar.

Recently, I had the good fortune to speak with one of Orthopedics This Week’s “Top 19 sports medicine specialists in the U.S.” Cole has been the team physician for the Bulls during my storied career as a fan of the men in red and black.

The physician’s vigorous work behind the scenes has facilitated an environment in which the Chicago Bulls are better able to excel. He maintains a level-headed demeanor, even when his typical work day is packed to the nosebleed seats.

“[Before a game], I usually get there an hour and a half or two hours before the game starts, [address] active issues, work out in the weight room shared with the Blackhawks at the United Center, shower and get to our seats just prior to tip-off,” Cole said.

Cole’s 365-day work year keeps him on his toes, and his relentless efforts assist the Bulls in their charge toward championships. He addresses a wide range of medical issues, from patching up a simple laceration to mending a severed anterior cruciate ligament.

“We cover training camp, the combine where draft candidates are evaluated, help coordinate the medical staff, provide game coverage, and supervise the entire medical team that shares in the responsibilities,” Cole said.

Cole ensures that everyone from the superstar to the last man on the bench is able to operate at a high level. Millions stretching from the Magnificent Mile to Madison Street rely on his expertise on a nightly basis.

“[My motivation] is the challenge of managing a high-level athlete. The best part is the camaraderie of working with a system of trainers and my colleagues,” Cole said.

Cole acts as a formative example of the daily academic challenges involved with professional sports. Cole said it best: “I want to be recognized for how I take care of patients, not who I take care of.”

While the vast majority of emphasis will remain on hype and celebrity, on super-human dunks and emphatic rejections, critical work will continue to be performed by skilled professionals who have proved themselves professionally and established themselves as innovators in medical specialties.

Putting it colloquially, these talented professionals deserve as much of a shout-out as those pictured on cereal boxes and sports drinks.