



## Robert E. Martin, MBA

Bob has spent decades serving in various senior executive corporate roles and has been involved in a number of equity, entrepreneurial, and business ventures over his professional career. Bob has coached youth sports for more than 30 years and has served on the Board of the Blue Springs, Missouri Youth Outreach Unit; the Board of the Kansas City Originals softball organization; and has been a longstanding member of the National Fastpitch Coaches Association.

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**TOPIC ARTICLE**

## "Ankle Sprains - From Mild to Severe and Beyond"

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During my early teen years, I discovered basketball - I even started to neglect my first love - the dirt diamond. I'd lace-up my high-top, Converse Chuck Taylor All Stars and it was on.

Wherever there was a court, pick-up basketball became an obsession. Thereafter, my ever present, reoccurring, most common basketball injury was ankle sprains... they became a constant specter... the dreaded turned ankles. No matter what sports you play, sprains will likely eventually come visiting you, too.

First, I'd like to share the ankle sprain basics - told from my layperson, ex-dedicated gym rat's perspective. There are three degrees of sprains... ranging from mild to severe, then beyond. The "beyond" covers when the occasional roll overs become chronic, or fail to heal... related to you by someone who learned that lesson the hard way.

A mild sprain recovery can take a couple of weeks. A severe sprain can take six to twelve weeks to completely heal... every athlete and every sprain is different. Over the course of my former hoops playing days, I got close once, early on, but fortunately managed to dodge the scalpel.

My first serious, really severe strain occurred during my senior year of high school... very late in the basketball season. It constituted my last high school basketball game. Swelling normally takes a few hours to occur. If it isn't a severe sprain, the swelling usually subsides in a couple of days.

I can tell you that first severe sprain blew-up like a giant balloon... with lots of not so pretty colors too. I don't recall how long it took for the swelling to subside, but I can confirm that it hurt like... well, you know. I didn't take any pain relievers, but anti-inflammatory medication can help with both the pain and swelling. Ibuprofen later became my go to anti-inflammatory/pain reliever.

Most of us have turned an ankle at one time or another. Pain is always part of the equation... especially when trying to bear weight. Swelling and bruising are also common symptoms of a sprain... not to leave out the tell tale limp when walking.

As the years rolled by, I became increasingly familiar with the different degrees of sprains:

- Grade One (mild), tenderness and some swelling. I could bear weight, but there was discomfort when walking. Grade One sprains involve some ligament stretching and a possible tiny tear. Not a lot of bruising.
- Grade Two (moderate): An incomplete tear... swelling and acute pain.
- Grade Three (severe): A completely torn ligament... hurts like, well, you know. In my case, I also experienced a sensation of slight nausea in conjunction with a tear too.

That first severe sprain was a real doozy... more about that later. Over the ensuing years, I was able to commit the standard sprained ankle treatment protocol to memory. The acronym, "RICE" was a reoccurring routine that I

became thoroughly familiar with: 1) Rest (more about that later, too, 2) ice, 3) compression, and 4) elevation. There are numerous over the counter drugs that may work for you – you might consult your physician or pharmacist for recommendations.

If you have a tear that won't heal and/or that requires ligament reconstruction, then that may require surgery. A normal outcome is a physician or physical therapist's recommended course of therapy involving exercise to restore range of motion, strength, flexibility and stability.

Compression often dictates the use of an elastic bandage. I don't know why, but it is recommended that you start wrapping away from your heart. How tight to make is a bit of a personal preference, but obviously wrapping an ankle sprain too tight is inadvisable.

Elevation is intended to reduce the swelling. The use of an ice bag or ice bath as soon as possible after the injury occurs is also a good idea... doing so in 15 minute intervals every couple of hours. Splints, braces, taping and/or crutches might also be required. When the pain and swelling subsides, then physical therapy can begin.

Okay, all of that is pretty run of the mill... however, I hope to share how my misguided obsession with basketball contributed to turning my sprained ankle specter into a persistent, reoccurring, unwelcome occurrence.

My high school basketball career abruptly ended as a result of that first severe sprain. I came down with a rebound with my toe turned down underneath all of my rapidly descending weight when I landed. My coach wanted me to reenter the game, but that was a definite no go. The ensuing evening was an extended, painful ordeal... no sleep. My ankle blew-up with excessive swelling. When the next morning finally arrived, I rolled in (in a wheelchair) for a medical evaluation... it wasn't good. A ligament had apparently pulled away, taking a small piece of bone with it. Presumably, the piece of bone had become lodged in my ankle joint. The doctor's initial thought was that it might eventually require surgery... and that might ultimately culminate in a possible lifetime limp. In my mind that constituted a worse than worse scenario... a prospective, "worst." We started out with a walking cast to see how it was going to progress.

Thankfully, it didn't require surgery. A few weeks later, I was back out on the asphalt in a walking cast shooting baskets. When the cast came off, things were a lot better than "worst," I was back in action. A lifetime of schooling followed regarding the inconvenience of repeated ankle sprains. Thing is, ankle sprains take a long time to heal properly. Thoroughbreds have to gallop on the track and gym rats have to scurry about on the court... it is simply so... an unofficial eleventh commandment.

Hardwood pounding translated into a midlife torrent of sprains... tightening up the laces and playing through. Lots of ice and elevation... and constantly re-aggravating the same injury. That brings us to Personal Insight #1. As first suggested above, soft tissue injuries require time to heal. It isn't written in stone, but it probably should be.

You cannot play through tears. When a ligament is completely torn, that's that. Of course, this overzealous gym rat would try to prematurely come back, and that's that... again and again. Personal Insight #2... that elevate, ice, compression and lean back stuff is legit... take it to heart. If you try to get back too quickly, then you'll be back off of it again real soon... time after time.

Here's my summarizing Personal Insight, mild sprains can be endured; however, moderate and severe sprains can be REALLY painful. A partial tear can become a complete tear. Don't rush back. If you jump back on the court prematurely, the ankle will still be weak and that can contribute to developing a chronic condition... prolonged misery - spoken, based on personal experience.

Ace bandages, taping and ankle braces can all provide extra support, but they do not substitute for allowing adequate time for proper, complete healing. My "gym rat" days are long past... the hot, sweaty gyms and squeaking shoes and countless pick-up games will always hold fond memories for me... and many friends made.

Our bodies talk to us... pay attention. If it yells... heed. If screams... concede and put your ankle specter to rest. AND GOD BLESS DEM OLD SCHOOL, HIGH TOP, LACE-UP, CHUCK TAYLORS TOO! Air Jordan high flyers... eat your hearts out!

BIO: The author played multiple sports growing-up. As an adult, he spent decades coaching youth sports... mainly softball attributable to him and his wife Dee having many daughters and granddaughters. The kids and grandkids didn't all play sports and that was perfectly fine with mom/grandma, dad/grandpa... the Martin patriarch and matriarch have been delighted to observe as each offspring pursued their own, individual life paths. After concluding a successful professional career, Bob retired. After the onset of the Covid pandemic, Bob founded theBMSproject to contribute to the safety and well-being of young athletes and their families. Youth athletics are viewed as a portal into broader communities at-large.

***Together... here for our youth!***

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**EMERGENCY**

In a crisis call "911" immediately

● If considering self-harm, call "988"

The National Suicide Intervention Lifeline

**SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

To speak to a counselor,

Call (800) 656-4673

RAINN

**BULLYING/HAZING, VIOLENCE,  
ADDICTIONS & SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

For helpful resources,

[thebmsproject.org/Safety](https://thebmsproject.org/Safety)

**CHILD ABUSE**

To report suspected child abuse,

Call (800) 422-4453

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline

It is recommended that incident(s) of serious misconduct be reported to law enforcement.  
Minors should report incidents of misconduct to their parent(s) or guardian(s).