

5 MINUTES WITH ROSS CAIRNS

5 MINUTES WITH... ROSS CAIRNS, SPORTS PHYSICIAN,
NEWCASTLE SPORTS MEDICINE



Tell me a little about your sports medicine background.

I first got involved with Sports Medicine in England when I was a new medical graduate and attended Chelsea Football Club's training complex to help with an Academy clinic. My interest grew from there and when I moved to Australia and discovered that Sports & Exercise Medicine was a speciality that I could train in, I never looked back. I love working with athletes as well as the general public and I have a real passion for education too. The opportunities that have arisen from Sports Medicine have been phenomenal. The people you meet, the places you travel to, it's truly amazing. I'm still early in my career and I'm excited to see where it leads me.

What does a typical day for you consist of?

I don't have a typical day, which is what I love about my job! I consult three days a week, but I frequently have medical students or physiotherapists sitting in with me during a clinic. I give educational talks to GPs & physiotherapists frequently and spend a number of weeks/months each year overseas with the Olyroos (Australian under-23 football team). Sports Medicine is the easy part of my day, then I get home to my kids...

What is your favourite aspect of your job?

I love the clinical variety. It's not rare to see 10 different patients, each with different injured regions in the same day. I also find working with motivated athletes incredibly rewarding as they have a desire to get well ASAP and follow advice surprisingly well.

What has been the highlight of your career?

Being appointed the Olyroos team physician would have to be my personal highlight. From a big picture perspective though I am very proud to have been given the opportunity to work with the University of Newcastle to integrate Sports and Exercise Medicine into the undergraduate MD program, so the next generation of junior doctors in Newcastle will leave med school with a decent grasp of musculoskeletal (MSK) medicine and exercise prescription.

How did you become involved with SMA?

As soon as I learned of the organisation, I wanted to join. I'm passionate about what I do and wanted to be part of a group that is an advocate for my profession and like-minded health professionals across Australia.

FAVOURITES

Travel destination: Anywhere in Italy. I just love the culture, the food, the wine, the weather, the family values, the fashion and their love of football.

Sport to play/watch: Football and football.

Cuisine: Italian and most spicy dishes.

Movie: Probably Gladiator. I remember watching it with my mates

at Uni and it was just stunning.

TV program: 24, Suits or Breaking Bad.

Song: Chasing Cars by Snow Patrol.

Book: I smash the Jack Reacher books whenever they come out. Not one ounce of thought is needed to enjoy the book.

Gadget: Any games console although I couldn't function without Dropbox.

What do you think the benefit of being a SMA member provides, especially within your field?

As a Sports Physician I think SMA provides a wonderful platform to connect with other sports-oriented health professionals. Through SMA I have a network of people I can rely upon in my region that I know have an interest in MSK medicine which benefits my patients.

Describe your role as a Sports Physician at Newcastle Sports Medicine.

I'm one of only two Sports Physicians in Newcastle (and I don't think there's another one north of Newcastle until you reach Queensland) so I see an enormous variety of patients. I see as many athletes as I do inactive people with chronic issues. Last week I saw a 7-year old and the next consult was with a 94-year old – there aren't many disciplines where that happens! Because of the variety I see, I've surrounded myself with an excellent multidisciplinary team of Sports Physiotherapists and Sports Dieticians and we work together to achieve best outcomes for our patients. I try to spread the word of Sports Medicine wherever I can, so awareness of our expertise can be improved. We've been engaging with our local community as much as possible to increase this awareness and hopefully with time Sports Medicine will become more mainstream.

How did you come to be in this role?

I used to help my dad run aspects of his business when I was a kid and from that I developed a curiosity in what goes on behind the scenes of a business and what is required to be successful. I always wanted to setup a practice that was multidisciplinary and provided a level of care that is appropriate for Olympians and professional sportspeople but make it accessible to the general public. When I was training in Melbourne, I was part of some fantastic practices and I've tried to take the best parts from those practices and implement them at Newcastle Sports Medicine.

Besides sports medicine, what are you passionate about?

I couldn't get enough of football as a kid. I'd play every minute of every day whenever I could. My dad brought us up as Tottenham Hotspur fans which provided a good education in dealing with disappointment! Unfortunately, I'm hopelessly addicted to watching them. At times it's been a long and painful road, but the future is looking bright for the Spurs at last. COYS!

What's the best piece of advice anyone has ever given you?

Medically, if clinical signs and imaging don't match – the imaging is wrong.

Personally, be humble and treat everyone with respect.

Name four people, living or not, you would invite for a dinner party and why?

Gazza (Paul Gascoigne): He was my childhood hero and will always be a legend in my eyes.

Ricky Gervais: His mischievous humour appeals to me and he's just always smiling or laughing about something.

David Blaine: His magic tricks are so jaw-dropping that I can't truly believe they're not staged until I see them with my own eyes!

Vanessa Cairns (my wife): She's my inspiration and the person that keeps me grounded. Without her there I'd have my foot in my mouth half the time from being over-excited.

USEFUL LINKS:

Newcastle Sports Medicine Clinic: <https://newcastlesportsmedicine.com.au/>

Team Talk Sports and Exercise Medicine Research Blog: <https://www.teamtalksem.com/>