

PHYSICAL PAIN, MENTAL THERAPY

Coach: Petras is ahead of his time

Coach Vic Wallace of Lambuth University said he's had players helped by Dr. Ray Petras' mental therapy.

By JOHN BASSETTI
VINDICATOR SPORTS STAFF

Don't tell Lambuth University football coach Vic Wallace that Dr. Ray Petras is a charlatan.

"I think somewhere down the road that this may end up being one of the big advances in pain control and elimination; that's because I've seen it work," said Wallace, who met Petras, a Campbell native, in 1989 when Wallace was coach at the University of St. Thomas (Minn.).

"We had a number of people he worked with who had various injuries, and some completely healed and others were able to manage their pain and play through it."

Wallace came to Lambuth, an NAIA Division I school in Jackson, Tenn., for the 1993 season.

One of Wallace's most recent players to find success is Ron Dixon, a 2000 draftee of the New York Giants. The NFL rookie returned two kickoffs 97 yards each in the playoffs — one versus the Eagles and the other against Baltimore in Super Bowl XXXV.

Heard him speak: While coach at William Jewell in Liberty, Mo. from 1981-85, Wallace ran the psychology dept. and introduced self-imagery to the football program. At St. Thomas from 1986-92, Wallace heard Petras speak, then asked him if he'd be interested in helping.

"I suggested that I thought the elimination of pain was somewhat psychological," said Wallace. "I'd seen athletes who were able to play through pain and others who couldn't."

At first, Petras worked with players on mental blocks and mental focusing.

Then he began experimenting with injuries.

"He did some fantastic things, some unbelievable things," said Wallace.

Quick recovery: "We had a quarterback [Steve Metzger, at St. Thomas] who injured his shoulder and couldn't lift his arm. We sent Steve to one

PART TWO OF A FOUR-PART SERIES



TODAY: A college football coach is a firm believer in Dr. Petras' methods.

WEDNESDAY: A Youngstown State

trainer agrees with Dr. Petras' pain treatment only if the path has been cleared medically.

THURSDAY: Nothing against physicians, but Dr. Petras thinks there's a better way.

Saw evidence: Wallace said that Lambuth's president at that time was a big football booster and saw what Petras had done for Taylor.

"He actually bought a ticket and flew Ray to Tennessee to work with our football players and other athletes — about 30 total," he explained. "They had various improvement in their injuries. It doesn't work 100 percent of time. I'd say in the experience I've had working with him with a number of athletes over six or seven years, it significantly helped 80 percent."

Apparently, Wallace's appreciation of the work done by someone such as Petras isn't popular.

"It's frustrating to Ray why people think that if you don't take a pill, you can't be cured. It boggles the mind that people will listen to an advertisement and think you have to put something in your body through injection."

Mental therapy: Wallace recalled seeing a "60 Minutes" segment a few years ago on mental therapy for pain.

"They interviewed people at a pain clinic and said there's a mental aspect of pain that becomes physical when your brain produces hormones that trigger pain receptors. They were doing research on exactly what Ray was doing," said Wallace.

"What he does is good. But, it seems, medical people don't want to use it because it's not in their textbook. That's why people are afraid to try it. I say he's ahead of his time."

PETRAS | Coach: doctor is ahead of his time

or two orthopedic doctors and our training room was treating him with conventional methods. Ray worked with him for an hour or so on Thursday. On Saturday, he threw five touchdowns with his throwing arm. The injury never recurred."

The same thing happened prior to the eighth game of the '94 season when Lambuth was two wins away from a conference crown and the national playoffs.

"We had an All-America tight end [Justin Taylor] who was on crutches and unable to put weight on his ankle. We had him X-rayed by an orthopedic doctor who said he wouldn't be able to play," said Wallace.

"Then I called Ray and asked him if he ever talked to someone over the phone. He said he worked with an ice hockey player before, but it helps to see facial expressions. We put Justin in an office and Ray worked with him for 40 minutes. Taylor came out of the room carrying his crutches and the pain was gone. He played on Saturday. We went on to win the conference and we went on to the national playoffs."

AT A GLANCE

Dr. Raymond Petras

Dr. Raymond Petras is a consultant in the areas of Injury Management (Board certified/AAPM) and Performance Enhancement. He has worked with the Phoenix Suns, has been listed in the *Sports Psychology Resource Guide* for USA Track and Field elite athletes and the sport psychology and injury management resource for USA Speed Skating and is the former USA Track and Field/Sports Committee chair for Minnesota.