

Game, Set...Hip Flexors?

by John C. Gifford, CBPM, NCTMB - Owner, Motionwise®

She's been playing tennis for twelve years. That statement doesn't seem so interesting except for the fact that she's sixteen. Ashley Leinweber has excelled greatly in tennis. Winning the state championship as a freshman and sophomore in high school, making it three rounds in the front draw of the Hard Court Super National, and being seeded sixteenth at the Midwest Closed are just a few of her favorite tennis achievements thus far in her young career. The greatest challenger to her advancement in tennis has not been the opponent across the net. The toughest opponent most capable of hindering her career is a muscle group: the hip flexors. "When I was at states last year my back was bothering me so intensely that I could not execute a backhand and I was beginning to wonder if I would have a future in competitive tennis," she told me.



the problem. Her symptoms were in her lower back but the pulling was coming from the hip flexors. After her first session I did not give her a stretch for her lower back; I gave her a stretch for the muscles in the front of her body. If you are standing upright and you lift your knee in the air, you have your hip flexors to thank. If they are too tight they can tilt the pelvis forward and you will feel this pulling as lower back pain. I regularly suggest that therapists and patients alike to be mindful that the hip flexors are "the front of the back." These muscles need to be considered in any effort that is aimed at easing discomfort in the back.

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How is Ashley now? She is back on the courts and as of this writing, off to Illinois for another tournament. I figured her idol would be a famous tennis player. Nope. Her Dad. Game, set, match. Till next time,

When I first started working with Ashley's back pain issues it became clear that her lower back was not



John Gifford has performed over 30,000 sessions as an approved provider of sports massage and a unique style of bodywork called Bonnie Prudden Myotherapy® and Exercise Therapy. His mission as a clinician, lecturer, consultant, and author is to empower people to lead more active, successful, and fulfilling lives through the reduction and prevention of their muscular pain and tension.

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