



HawkGrips: Getting a Grip on Soft Tissue Injuries

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My name is Steve Smith and I am a Sports Physical Therapist and a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist. I have been a member of the Los Angeles Dodgers organization since January 2012 and I currently hold the position of Major League Physical Therapist.

I earned a Master's Degree from the University of Maryland Baltimore's Physical Therapy School in 2002 and my Doctorate Degree in 2003. I spent the first several years of my career working as a staff Physical Therapist and a Clinic Director for Physiotherapy Associates in Maryland and Delaware. Then in 2007 my family and I moved from Maryland to Florida where I began working for Athletes' Performance (AP; now EXOS).

During my time at AP, I had the opportunity to rehab and train a wide variety of athletes of all ages and skill levels. My main clientele were high-level tactical athletes, collegiate/professional football players, and professional baseball players but I also worked with soccer, hockey, basketball, rugby, track and field, boxing, and recreational athletes as well. As a result of my background and experience, I've been invited to present and teach at numerous seminars and courses around the country.

I first started using IASTM (Instrument Assisted Soft Tissue Mobilization) while working at AP. I was fortunate enough to have very knowledgeable colleagues, especially Jeremy Hassler and Sue Falsone, who were able to teach me how, when, where, and why to apply IASTM to my athletes. My initial instruments were nothing more than jade, buffalo horn, and a set of plastic Gua Sha tools. I then became a certified ASTYM (Augmented Soft Tissue Mobilization) provider and used those tools for the next several years.

At the beginning of 2014, I decided to explore alternatives to the ASTYM tools. The fees associated with ASTYM, and Graston for that matter, were too expensive to continue using and I did not want to get locked into any multi-year contracts.

After trying several different tools (the Edge Tool, the Fibroblaster, and the Técnica Gávilan set to name a few) I still wasn't satisfied. As I continued to look for a better option, everything I read and everyone I asked were recommending me to try HawkGrips. After contacting the HawkGrips team and inquiring about their instruments, they sent me a kit. From that day forward, I haven't stopped using HawkGrips. I feel like HawkGrips tools literally give me an "edge" when I use them.

I use the HawkGrips tools to treat muscle strains, tendinopathies, fibrotic areas with impaired microcirculation, areas adjacent to injured tissue, and for athletic recovery. The players I treat love and appreciate HawkGrips as much as I do. These unique instruments complement other forms of manual therapy that I use including, instrument assisted fascial mobilization, Fascial Stretch Therapy (FST™), mobilization and manipulation, dry needling, myofascial release, vacuum therapy, etc. These therapies along with HawkGrips fit nicely into my treatment paradigm where

muscle inhibition and facilitation; building and restoring tissue tolerance; kinetic linking; accelerated healing; and athlete recovery is paramount.

HawkGrips has addressed all the less than optimal issues I found with the other tools I've used in the past. The HawkGrips instruments are of the highest quality and the edges are precise. My favorite feature of HawkGrips is the texturing. This unique feature prevents the instrument from slipping out of my hands.

HawkGrips provides a variety of instruments to address different areas of the body. The HG2 has large handles at both of its ends to improve grip. The grip is large and it is my "go to option" when I need to initiate treatment on larger areas of the body, like the anterior or posterior thigh and thorax. For smaller, more specific areas, I use the HG8 or HG7. If I need to work on and around bony prominences, like the medial epicondyle of the elbow or the acromion of the shoulder, I use the HG9. The HG6 and HG5 give me maximal contact area when working on hinged joints or regions with rounded contours like the knee and elbow. If a catcher takes a foul tip off his hand and I need a tool to treat an individual finger then I use the HG4. There is literally an instrument for every part of the body.

HawkGrips does not just provide great products, but they provide outstanding customer service as well. Like the quality of their instruments, their service is second to none. The HawkGrips staff is always courteous, generous, patient and very responsive to all my inquiries. With HawkGrips there aren't any hidden fees, there are no contracts and no nonsense.

My goal in writing this article is to help my colleagues, other therapists, and athletes alike by recommending HawkGrips. I hope those that read this article go directly to HawkGrips and get the tools they need to improve the treatments they apply to their athletes and others in their care. It is my opinion that HawkGrips is the best IASTM product on the market. Thanks for reading!

All the best,



Steve Smith, PT, DPT, SCS, CSCS



Los Angeles Dodgers' Physical Therapist, Steve Smith, is shown here using HG8 to treat the teres major/latissimus dorsi of a right handed pitcher to improve elevation of the arm and scapular upward rotation in side-lying. This is a common area of hypertonicity and fibrosis for overhead athletes.

