



When spikesmag.com met Andy Miller

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When spikesmag.com was struggling to be fit for a 30 minute run with Ethiopian distance running legend Haile Gebrselassie in California, there was only one man who could save the day – leading massage therapist Andy Miller.

The prospect of running (at jogging pace, we were reassured) with a two-time Olympic champion and multiple world record-breaking distance running should not be greeted with trepidation. After all how many people can say they have ever played Roger Federer at tennis, Tiger Woods at golf or Cristiano Ronaldo at football? **We had a chance to run with Haile Gebrselassie – the greatest distance runner in history – this should not be taken lightly.**

Yet your spikesmag.com writer had a reason to fear. **A recent bout of shin splints had laid me low and suddenly the prospect of even a gentle 30-minute run seemed a daunting one.** Injury had created nagging doubts. Could I complete the run pain-free? Could I even start at all? Would I have to concede defeat to shin splints?!

With a three-week lead up to an adidas press trip to Santa Monica, I had a race to reach full fitness. **I felt like an athlete in a last ditch bid to be fit for a tilt at a major championship.** I recruited the services of a London-based physio.

Yet despite his best efforts, every time I tried to run I got the same old feeling. **Pins and needles in my shin followed by a dull, aching pain which reduced me down to a slow, frustrating walk.**

Worse, my foot developed an allergic reaction to the physio's strapping which resulted in an

irritating rash. Could I ever be fit? Was this moment of destiny about to pass me by?

After three days of complete rest I arrived at the day of the run, which was due to take place early evening.

Before the evening sojourn there was work to be done at the Adidas Training Center in Carson, California to carry out a series of interviews.

Trying my best to put thoughts behind me of 'that' run, **a miracle arrived, a gift from heaven, and it came in the unusual shape of giant 19st massage therapist Andy Miller.**

Miller, in case you don't know, is known as the best 'Mr Fixit' in the track and field business. **He has worked with a host of the world's top athletes including the likes of former and current Olympic champions** – Maurice Greene, Jeremy Wariner, Haile Gebrselassie, Shawn Crawford, Veronica Campbell-Brown and Hicham El Guerrouj.

And here he was at the center on hand to help some of the world's top athletes. Having met Miller for the first time last summer he cheerily greeted spikesmag.com and said without hesitation or prompting, **"do you need anything fixing?"**

"Well, yes," I replied, "there is one thing you can help me with?"

The initial feeling of relief that the man with the healing hands was willing to treat me was quickly replaced by fear. **This is someone known as the leader in his field of massage therapy – a man able to dig his giant hands deep into the body.** Hold on... deep = pain, right?

Miller told me to lie down on a treatment table, which was set up on the high jump apron of the 400m track at the Adidas Training Center. He then listened patiently to my injury past.

"Right then, lets have a look at you... relax," he said. "Boy, you're tense."

Bizarrely he kept lifting my arm up and asking me to push against his hand. Sometimes, I could push against him with all the force of Hercules – well, I may have exaggerated a little there – but other times, depending on where his arm or finger was positioned, **it flopped down helplessly like a drunk being floored by a right hook.**

This, he told me, indicated my body was not properly aligned and so began the five-minute process of realigning my far-from-athletic form. He worked on back, neck, hips and leg. He cracked, he twisted, he pulled – sending regular short, sharp bursts of pain shooting through my body. **He**

pulled my limbs in the kind of directions that felt most peculiar for a sedentary writer.

But the most demanding work came on massaging the feet which he insisted would help ease the inflammation in my shin.

“You might not like this,” he added and I feared the worst as he aggressively went to work on the soles of my feet.

Trying to be brave – after all World 100m champions Tyson Gay and Veronica Campbell-Brown were stood only 15 metres away – I was trying to ignore the pain. **I failed miserably and was soon pathetically letting out short, sharp shrieks.**

“No pain, no gain,” remarked Miller, it has to be said, only semi-encouragingly. “No pain, no gaaaaaaiiiiiiin,” I wimper, as his powerful fingers sharply press on my feet. After what seemed an eternity, well, probably nearer a minute-and-a-half, the massage is over and he tells me to leap off the table.

I jump off and an unusual feeling comes over me. **I am light-headed and weightless – maybe how an astronaut might feel in space. My whole body feels invigorated.** My legs and back feel like new. That pain in my neck I’ve had for five years when twisting to the left has gone. Nothing, but nothing can stop me now.

Six hours later and I have just completed a 30-minute pain-free run with Haile Gebrselassie. **The sweat is dripping from brow but I have a broad grin.** The heat from the sun and the gentle breeze whipping off the Pacific Ocean leaves me feeling alive.

Thank you, Andy Miller, you miracle man... you did it.

