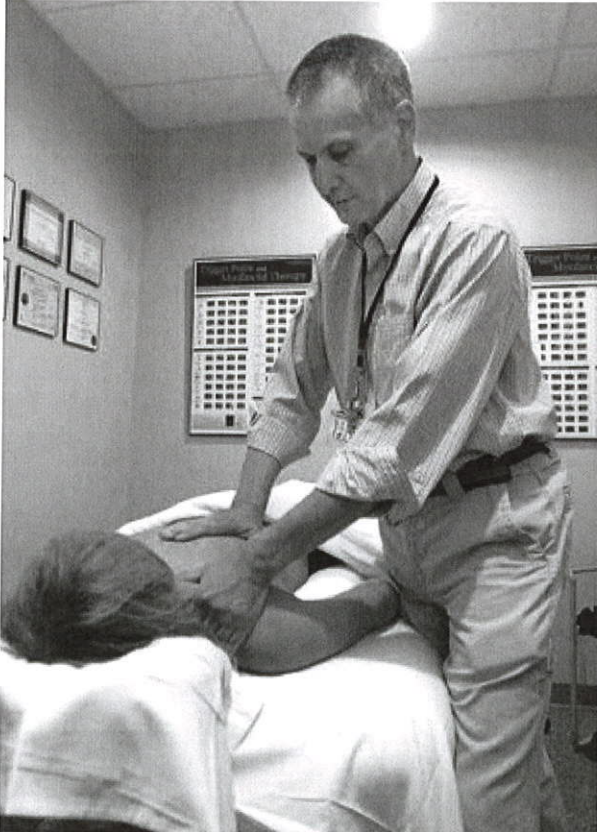


# Moscow therapist Olympics-bound

London games will be a homecoming of sorts for Paul Weston, selected as part of the medical team



Tribune/Barry Kough

Paul Weston, sports massage therapist at Gritman Medical Center at Moscow, will soon be in his hometown of London, helping treat the 23,000 Olympic athletes from around the world.

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By **DAVID JOHNSON** of the Tribune |

MOSCOW - Forget the skeletal structure. What really propels an Olympic athlete is muscle. And Paul Weston hopes to help in keeping those muscles pumping.

Weston, a 56-year-old sports massage therapist at Gritman Medical Center in Moscow, will be leaving soon for London, his hometown and venue of the 2012 Summer Olympic Games.

"I grew up in South London. This is huge personally because my family is still there and I'll be staying with my mother," Weston said. "And from the professional point of view, I'll be working with the best of the best."

That is, the best sports massage practitioners in the world, as well as the world's most elite athletes.

"I'm part of the medical team. But as a sports massage practitioner I'm going to be working in the polyclinic, which is the Athletes Village health center."

He'll be part of the physical therapies group, which includes sports medicine physicians, physiotherapists and sports massage practitioners. There's also one chiropractor and one osteopathic physician on the team.

Weston will leave July 22 for the games and return Aug. 4. As a volunteer, he's paying for everything, except a uniform, which he received during a recent orientation trip to London.

"It's probably the most expensive uniform I'll ever have by the time I get done paying for this," Weston said of the adventure. He recalled applying to be a volunteer immediately after London was announced as host of the games, then receiving an email last December from the London Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games. It read: "Congratulations ... we are delighted to inform you that we would like to offer you a role in the medical team at the Olympic Games."

A triathlete and four-time finisher of Iron Man competitions in Canada, Weston said he'll be on-task throughout the Olympics and probably won't see much, if any, of the actual competition.

"I do not have any tickets for anything."

But he anticipates the possibility of being in the thick of what happens, from a medical standpoint, behind the scenes. Sports massage therapy, Weston explained, was really pioneered by past Russian Olympic teams. It's become widespread and he'll be available to all 23,000 athletes from all the countries represented.

"It could be anybody," he said of the athletes in need of a massage. "We cover the whole range from archery right on through to track and field."

The hub of activity will be in the Olympic Athletes Village, the only place where Weston has security clearance to be, unless called for an emergency or if he is needed temporarily in another venue.

"With event work, you're either helping the athletes prepare for competition, inter-event work, like if they're doing multiple races, and then post-event working with their recovery."

This will be Weston's second Olympic Games, having been selected for the 2002 Winter Sports Massage Team for the Olympic Games in Salt Lake City. He graduated as a certified massage/neuromuscular therapist from the Colorado Institute of Massage Therapy in 1997. He earned the National Certification in Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork in 1998. He's been the massage therapy coordinator at Gritman for the past seven years.

"It's a big deal," Weston said of his trip. "I get to work with the best of the best folks in my discipline, and with the world's best athletes."

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