

PATENTLY ABSURD

WITH THE NFL IN FULL PAIN-PACKED STRIDE, and NBAers and NHLers battling 'til they're black-and-blue night after night, trainers are always on the lookout for miracle cures that will keep their players off the shelf. The U.S. Patent Office has some stuff that may help—and much that won't. -BRETT DEUTSCH and KYLE STACK



1898. BALMING INFLUENCE. French pharmacist Jules Bengué brings his mix of methyl salicylate, menthol and camphor to America. A century later **Bengay** pain-relief cream is still revered by weekend warriors—and favored by locker room pranksters everywhere.

1959. THE ICE PACK COMETH. Kwik-Kold of America scores a patent for a “chemical freezing package” that keeps a chemical away from water until a seal is broken. Once they’re mixed, an endothermic reaction is unleashed, turning the package cold. Like marriage, in a sideline pack.

1978. STRETCH MARKED. After late Eagles trainer G.E. “Moose” Detty patents a knee brace made of **neoprene**, he leaves the team to form Pro Orthopedic Devices. No doubt then-coach Dick Vermeil sheds a tear upon learning of his departure.



1987. ONE GOODED IDEA. Edward Stout of Prairie Village, Kan., patents a method for treating sprains featuring a gel that remains malleable at extreme temperatures. Put in wraps, the gel can offer heat or cold to affected areas. Bonus: The brand name, **Elasto-Gel**, could be a supervillain.

2008. COLD FEET. Former SEC trainers Debbie and Warren Morris tire of seeing jocks messily ice feet and ankles. So they create the **Morris Boot**: a giant foot-shaped Ziploc-like bag with two shells—one for a foot, one for ice. College and pro teams come knocking right away—out of concern for their expensive locker room carpeting, no doubt.

1900. ATTRACTIVE PROPOSITION. Boston’s Andrew Steiger receives a patent for a wearable magnetic device, extolling the healing properties of the “electric phenomena” produced when a magnet interacts with body heat. And, in so doing, he paves the way for New Age healers to preach the same hogwash about copper bracelets.

1918. ACE HIGH. Chicago’s William Augustine invents a canvas belt-and-buckle system designed to hold a hot water bottle or ice bag to the body. The same year, Becton Dickinson & Co. awards a \$200 prize to the doctor who coins the best moniker for its competing “All Cotton Elastic” wrap. The former would be forgotten. The latter would become **ACE bandages**.



1969. ARMS HEALER. Wayne McCormick of Portsmouth, N.Y., files a patent for a dual-layered, zipper-pocketed, rubberized, ice-holding flannel sleeve. That modern MLB hurlers still employ unwieldy postgame bandage-and-ice-bag wraps suggests Wayne’s brainchild never quite caught on.

1991. POSITIVE INFLUENCE. After magnetic therapy relieves his back pain, Bruce Spiegler starts Therion Research to produce **magnetized braces** and supports for the whole body. The firm claims its stronger magnets penetrate into deep tissue. Meanwhile, New Agers are still pushing bracelets.



2009. BULLETPROOF THEORY. Pennsylvania’s Unequal Technologies licenses a patented Kevlar design to athletic-tape makers Cramer Products. Eagles team orthopedist Paul Marchetto says Kevlar tape holds 90% of its strength after an hour versus just 10% for cotton versions. Plus, Kevlar offers other helpful perks. Right, Plax?