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## COMMENTARY

### Tribute to Sports and Exercise Medicine's Iconic Couple Dr. Jack and Cheryl Taunton: A Personal Perspective

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#### Abstract

This article briefly describes the unique teamwork and profound impact that Dr. Jack Taunton and his wife, Cheryl, have had on sport, sports and exercise medicine, and exercise science in Canada. It also emphasizes the incredibly positive influence their contributions have had on a diverse group of people. **Health & Fitness Journal of Canada 2020;13(4):21-23.**

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#### Introduction

It is a daunting task to somehow capture the magnitude and to appropriately celebrate the contributions that Dr. Jack Taunton and his wife, Cheryl, have made to sport, sports and exercise medicine, and exercise science in our province and in our country. The long list of achievements and distinguished awards that Jack has received have been well documented. His CV reads as though it was the combined accomplishments of several professionals from different disciplines over decades of dedicated service. These accomplishments and awards will surely be described and highlighted within this set of journal publications and, therefore, I would like to take a different approach, a personal one. I will attempt to describe how a unique and complimentary team, an iconic couple, combined to not only impact and help

shape the landscape of sports and exercise medicine in British Columbia but how they have also influenced and supported so many people along the way.

There are few individuals in any profession that have had as many diverse and profound contributions to their field and their community. And rather than being a "jack of all trades", Dr. Jack Taunton has been a master of all – pioneer/visionary, clinician, researcher, professor/teacher/mentor, leader, and fundraiser. Of course, this seems implausible for any one person, even for Jack. However, he was only able to accomplish this through the extraordinary teamwork with his wife and partner, Cheryl – leader, manager, planner, organizer, writer, coordinator, problem-solver, and team-player. The synergy between their complimentary attributes is

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why the contributions of these two individuals is so much greater than the sum of their parts.

As a pioneer, Jack's ideas and vision in co-founding such ground-breaking entities as the Allan McGavin Sports Medicine Centre, the Lion's Gate Road Runners, the BMO Vancouver International Marathon, and the Vancouver Sun Run were complimented by Cheryl's planning, organizational, and administrative skills. Cheryl provided the necessary process and structure to develop Jack's ideas into reality. Jack's incredible energy and enthusiasm was focused and somewhat tempered through Cheryl's organization and pragmatism. The perfect platform to allow Jack to fly.

Jack was an incredible teacher and mentor to so many grad students and clinicians from many different disciplines. Always available, he had a natural ability to push and motivate students while positively reinforcing their purpose. The selfless care and support that Jack showed his students and patients was matched only by Cheryl's selfless support of the same. However, while Jack would immerse himself in his clinical, educational, and research work, Cheryl would be right by his side in her various roles - clinic manager, administrator, writer, and mother of their two young girls. Despite all these demands, and while Jack was leading various medical teams at Olympic and International Games, Cheryl made sure their two young girls were getting to field hockey and soccer practices. She guided their optimal care and development. Both girls, women now, have meant the world to Jack and Cheryl and have gone on to exceptional personal and professional successes.

Together, Jack and Cheryl have collaborated to support the elite and the professional athlete. Jack was the team

physician for the Vancouver Grizzlies and, for over 25 years, the Canadian Men's and Women's Field hockey teams. Cheryl was the Director of High Performance for Field Hockey Canada and head of delegation at the Beijing Olympics in 2008. However, they have also been just as engaged and passionate at the grass-roots level. Cheryl has volunteered countless hours and served on local gymnastics, soccer, field hockey, and figure skating boards. Jack has contributed in so many varied ways to grassroots sports - from physician and researcher educating coaches and parents in injury management and prevention strategies to advisor and committee member on countless youth sport boards and initiatives. Another example of the extensive and diverse impact they have made on sport and physical activity - from grassroots to the elite.

Perhaps no period of time crystalized the teamwork of Jack and Cheryl more than Jack's role as Chief Medical Officer in the lead-up and execution of the medical and anti-doping teams for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. The medical team was recognized by the IOC medical commission as the most successful in Games history. This was due in large part to Jack's leadership and leadership style. With his many strong relationships across the country and reputation as a servant, "team-first" leader, he was able to have the top clinicians and consultants volunteer and businesses financially support the Games to an unprecedented level. He created a true sense of "team" which is how he and Cheryl have always worked. Jack supported every team member and Cheryl supported Jack - just like it has always been.

For all of their accomplishments and achievements in the field of sports and exercise science, perhaps what is most

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impressive about Jack and Cheryl is their true interest in, connection with, and care for people. Their family, friends, and colleagues were always their priority. This care for people extended to the athletes they served - their empathy, selflessness, and dedication to athletes young and old. Jack's ability to inspire an injured athlete. Cheryl's comforting support. Both of them being available day or night to help in any way. The passion and pure intentions - always humble and ready to serve the athlete and the community despite their reputations as leaders and legends in the field. Whether a panicking grad student, a recently injured athlete, or a charity that needed their support - they were, they are, always available. This, in the end, is what remains most remarkable in this incredible life-long journey and contribution to sports and exercise medicine in our province and in our country.

### **Author's Qualification**

The author's qualifications are as follows: Richard Celebrini PhD, PT.