



SARASOTA

# Interactive Metronome

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The equipment surrounding Devon Chubek -- the headphones on his ears, the sensor attached to one hand, the laptop computer in front of him -- hardly seems capable of helping the Riverview High School student hit a baseball.

A tone comes through the headphones. Devon claps the sensor in time with the beat.

Over and over, the exercise continues.

His success in matching the tone is measured and recorded into the laptop. Behind Devon stands Mike Danski, the program instructor and founder of Anchor Achievement Coaching. Off to the side sits Devon's father, Don.

This is merely a demonstration. Devon already has completed 18 sessions with Danski, each one lasting about 40 minutes.

It's called the Interactive Metronome. It's a program that uses auditory guides and movement to improve timing, focus and concentration.

Essentially, it's a retraining of the brain.

## Reaction time

Devon doesn't know the specifics of the program. All the Riverview junior knows is that it works.

"It helped with my reaction time," he said. "I can see the ball better. I didn't think it was going to help me."

Danski, a certified trainer of the Metronome, said he spoke to Devon's American

Legion baseball coach, who said he had noticed a marked difference.

"He said he had never seen Devon hit the ball like he did this summer," said Danski. "He was just crushing the ball."

Devon's father also saw a change.

"What I really notice about him," Don Chubek said, "is he sees the ball better because he used to strike out quite a bit. Not this past Legion season. It's a great thing."

## Golf and football

The Professional Golf Association Tour has seen growing interest in the Metronome. Last year, Golf Digest magazine called it "the hottest piece of equipment on the tour."

Vijay Singh, the PGA Player of the Year, has made it part of his workout routine.

It has been used at the high school, college and professional levels. At St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Fort Lauderdale, Dr. Robert Mulder, who administers the program, called the improvement in his students "nothing short of amazing."

Former Notre Dame and current University of Washington football coach Tyrone Willingham is a strong endorser of the Metronome.

"If you have the ability to focus and concentrate, especially in pressure situations," he said, "you're much clearer in your thoughts and your view of what's taking place, enhancing your ability to make big plays."

## Mind-muscle connection

The Metronome was designed originally to help people with neurological and motor impairments.

HealthSouth hospitals offer it to patients suffering from brain injury, stroke and Parkinson's disease.

Since then it's been adapted to the sports arena. Athletes lift weights and watch their diets to improve physical performance. Danski called the Metronome the next step in mental training.

"It improves the mind-muscle connection," said Danski, who suffers from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and is an ADHD coach. "So when, for example, you're hitting a baseball, your swing is going to be more accurate because the message from your mind to your muscles has improved.

"After that 50 minutes, when you're done, you're sweating and your brain has been through a workout because you're demanding it to do things it does not want to do."

## Measuring milliseconds

The goal is to clap to the tone as closely as possible. The computer then records, in milliseconds, how far off the claps are to the beat.

Danski said anything less than 22 milliseconds is considered spectacular. Devon's average was 28, with his best being 11.

Singh, the professional golfer, had tremendous focus and timing. Without practice, his time was a jaw-dropping 15 milliseconds.

A typical session might have as many as 2,200 repetitions. The Metronome has 13 different variations on the clapping -- one

forces the student to touch a pad with a toe -- and can be adjusted in speed and difficulty level.

The length of the program varies from person to person. "It takes anywhere from three weeks to a couple of months," said Danski. "Once it's done, your brain is re-timed."

## Interactive future

Danski's 16-year-old son, Mike, also has ADHD. But since using the Metronome, his father said, Mike has stopped taking medication for that disease and for social anxiety.

He also lifts weights, and Danski has seen a dramatic improvement in his son's dead lift, squat and bench. In one month, he went from dead lifting 350 to 425 pounds.

Danski, a quarterback in college, said he has noticed an improved field of vision. "I know my motor timing for golf has improved," he said. "My slice is gone. My ability to recall information has improved."

Danski's goal is to introduce the Metronome to area high schools. He also wants to open a center for kids with ADHD.

"My vision is I will have people under me who will be trained and they will go out into people's homes," he said. "I will be the director and run the center."

