Cannabis Offers Battered Pro Athletes Both Hope and Healing

An increasing number of retired professional athletes are turning for cannabis for pain relief and a new career.

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Pro athletes are swarming to cannabis.

NFL Hall of Famer, Joe Montana recently announced his entrance into the cannabis industry. This month, the NHL Alumni Association announced a research partnership with the Canadian cannabis company, Canopy Growth. Meanwhile, retired athletes like Riley Cote, Todd Herremans, and Scott Parker are merging their sports expertise with cannabis. Retired pro-athletes are swarming to the industry, with CBD brands and dispensaries popping up under the banners of former sports-stars.

As retired Philadelphia Flyers player Riley Cote explained, “It’s been interesting. Cannabis and sports, five or ten years ago, couldn’t coexist in the same sentence and now it’s looked upon as the ultimate recovery tool.” When it comes to cannabis, Cote is more than just talk. Since his retirement as a defenseman from the Philadelphia Flyers, he’s become an outspoken advocate. Cote founded the Hemp Heals Foundation, an organization that “supports sustainable agriculture, sustainable health and clean natural medicine, while focusing on a holistic approach to optimum health.”

There’s no denying that cannabis can be a remarkable recovery tool. It offers significant symptom relief from the many ailments endured by retired pro-athletes. And retired athletes

DO face many health challenges. Yet, for many retired athletes, cannabis can offer more than healing.

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Health and hope.

A study published in the Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine showed 26.2 percent of retired NFL players required the continued use of opiates after leaving the sport. A study published in Injury Prevention, a British Medical Journal, showed the NHL loses hundreds-of-millions of dollars because of player injuries. And with the long-term effects of head trauma, the statistics are downright alarming. Both the NHL and NFL have settled head-trauma litigation and paid settlements to former players.

Image Credit: Jim Trocchio

Clearly, pro-sports players have an elevated risk for long-term health issues as a result of their career, so it’s not surprising an increasing number of athletes are turning to medical marijuana to enhance their wellness. But as Cote, who serves as the NHL ambassador for Athletes for CARE points out, retired athletes frequently face physical ailments, mental health issues and addiction issues after transitioning away from their sport.

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On top of that, many retired players, “struggle with who they are.” Cote further explains, until retirement “everyone kind of knows you for what you did – your job – your whole life,

and all of a sudden, you're not that anymore. You're kind of like a has-been. It was like, that was in the past."

It may be this newfound "lack of purpose" that makes the cannabis industry so appealing to retired athletes. "It's something to grab on to," said Cote, who co-founded the hemp line, BodyChek Wellness. He encourages athletes to think of cannabis, "not just as a healing mechanism for them to deal with their issues, but also as a business opportunity."

Cote adds, "This is all for the greater good of all people. So why not hop on the band wagon and be a part of it in some capacity? Use your skill set…it doesn't matter what you're good at, you can kind of intersect that with the cannabis space and healing."

For many retired athletes, cannabis offers more than just a way to achieve health and wellness, it offers hope and the glimmer of a new purpose.

Watch my interview with Riley Cote or read the transcript below.

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