[IMAGE]

In Shape For The Season

By Kathryn Feather

As the 2007 Major League Baseball season approaches the All Star break and the halfway mark, Little League players all over the country are fantasizing about playing in the World Series and thousands of adult fantasy league players are living their major league dreams as well - at least in a sense.

You know the dream; you probably had it yourself as a child. It’s the bottom of the ninth, two outs and the bases are loaded. Your team is down by three runs. You step out of the dugout to the cheers of an adoring crowd. You take a couple of practice swings and step into the batter’s box, digging in and giving the pitcher a confident glance. The pitcher goes into his windup, and here comes the pitch...

The rest of the dream takes on a hero quality as we picture ourselves taking a mighty cut and sending the ball soaring into the outfield seats. The crowd goes wild, chanting our name, as we enjoy our trot around the bases. We round third base to see our teammates huddled around home plate, waiting to mob us in celebration and lift us to their shoulders. Family, friends and fans alike see our heroics on the highlight reel of ESPN "SportsCenter" and we are forever remembered as the one who brought our team and our city the championship.

For most of us, this is just a fun daydream that carries over from childhood. But for New York Yankees center fielder Johnny Damon, this scene became a reality - more than once. Damon is in the middle of what arguably is a Hall of Fame career and has been the hero for more than one team. In 2004, he helped turn back the 86-year-old curse and bring a world championship to the long-overdue Boston Red Sox. He holds dozens of MLB records dating back to his rookie year with the Kansas City Royals in 1995. With the grind of a 162-game, physically demanding season, and a highlight reel of spectacular plays demonstrating a work ethic that requires giving everything in every at-bat and with every play, how does Damon keep his health intact?

"Without chiropractic, I wouldn’t be able to play consistently throughout the season," Damon said in an exclusive interview with *To Your Health.* "I’ve been under the care of a chiropractor for eight years. I first went [to a chiropractor] because my body was really out of whack from the constant grind of a 162-game

schedule. Initially, I admit that I was a little freaked out about the whole neck [adjustment] thing, but now, chiropractic is a must for me."

And Damon knows what it feels like to have a body "out of whack." In Game 5 of the 2003 American League Division Series, while Damon was with the Red Sox, he sustained a concussion when he collided with second baseman Damian Jackson as they pursued a 7th-inning fly ball hit by Jermaine Dye of the Oakland Athletics. Damon regained consciousness but continues to suffer the effects of that collision.

"I suffer from headaches about every 2-3 days, normally. When I use DiskForce [a spinal decompression machine utilized by some chiropractors], my headaches are gone for 2-3 weeks. It really takes care of the problem," Damon said. "I'm getting older, and older backs lock up. Last year, we had tons of back problems [on the Yankees]. There is no way we could get back and ready for another season without chiropractic."

Damon hasn't let injuries stop his career. In 2006, Damon finished 3rd in the major leagues in runs (115) and 9th in the American League in stolen bases (25). He also hit 24 home runs - a career high - and was one of only four players in the majors to hit at least 24 home runs and steal at least 24 bases. Damon attributes his success, in part, to a healthy lifestyle.

"I also use massage therapy on a regular basis as well," Damon said. "But, not the massage therapy most people probably think of when they think of massage. I use a real deep tissue form of massage. It really helps to not only relax my muscles, but also improve my circulation and get the toxins out of my body."

"Maintaining your health just leads to a better way of life for each individual," Damon said. "Chiropractic, specifically, can improve your posture, your circulation and just really benefit your quality of life in the long run."

Snapshot of Johnny Damon's Career Highlights

Johnny Damon was drafted right out of high school in the first round of the 1992 amateur draft. He turned down a baseball scholarship to the University of Florida and signed with the Kansas City Royals. Here are a few of his career highlights:

- 1993: Midwest League All Star outfielder.
- 1994-95: Kansas City Royals Minor League Player of the Year.

- 1995: Texas League Most Valuable Player before being called up by the Royals.
- 1996: 6th in the American League in stolen bases (25) and 10th in sacrifice hits (10).
- 1997: 3rd in the league in triples (8).
- 1998: 2nd in the league in triples (10).
- 1999: 2nd in the league in triples (9), 6th in stolen bases (36) and 9th in doubles (39).
- 2000: In his last year with the Kansas City Royals, Damon led the American League in runs (136) and stolen bases (46), was 2nd in hits (214), 3rd in triples (10) and sacrifice flies (12), and 10th in batting. He also was named the Royals' Player of the Year.
- 2001: In his only year with the Oakland Athletics, Damon was 3rd in the league in at bats (644) and 7th in runs (108).
- 2002: Voted to the All Star team for the first time.
- 2003: Joined elite company in becoming one of the few players in Major League Baseball history to record three base hits in one inning (first inning of a game against the Florida Marlins).
- 2004: In his third year with the Boston Red Sox, Damon hit two home runs (one a grand slam) to help the Red Sox become the first team in MLB history to overcome a 3-0 postseason series deficit, in a 10-3 win over longtime rivals the New York Yankees in game 7 of the American League Championship Series. The Sox went on to capture its first World Series crown in 86 years.
- 2005: Voted an All Star again.
- 2006: In his second year with the Yankees, Damon hit two home runs, drove in 8 runs and scored 8 runs in the first three games of a pivotal five-game series between the Yankees and his former team, the Boston Red Sox.

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