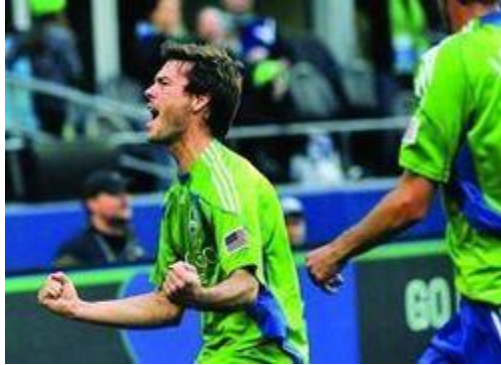


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## Sounders trust high-tech drills

Training: Players think Omegawave helps them prepare for Houston playoff



LUI KIT WONG/THE NEWS TRIBUNE FILE

Sounders midfielder Brad Evans credits Omegawave training for giving him a midseason boost in performance.

Ten months and 50 matches since reporting to training camp, Seattle Sounders FC is preparing for its most important game of the season.

And to help ensure that the players are fresh on Sunday, rather than exhausted from the grind, the club has turned to a high-tech training method that flips some conventional training wisdom on its head.

Since midsummer, Sounders players have regularly had a series of electrodes strapped to their legs, arms and chests, while the Omegawave training system makes readings and recommendations about which players would benefit most from rest or specific forms of training.

"You lie down, electrodes are put on you and there's a performance assessment of fatigue and state of readiness to perform," Sounders fitness coach Dave Tenney said. "What it really does is give you a snapshot of how fit you are right now, how tired you are right now, but more specifically, how you may be fatigued."

For competitive athletes trained to believe that pain is the feeling of weakness leaving the body, the idea of holding back rather than pushing forward can take some getting used to.

"Whether it's a Monday or a Friday, I usually go 100 miles an hour," Sounders midfielder Brad Evans said. "But now they tell me, Tuesday you go hard, then Wednesday you go pretty hard, and Thursday and Friday you kind of taper it down and let the heart kind of recover and the body recover so that when you come to (game day), from the beginning you're feeling fit. And then when it comes to the 80th minute, you're not tired like you usually are. You're able to go that extra 10 minutes full out and give your full effort."

That is the Sounders' goal for this weekend, when one final burst of energy might mean the difference between the season continuing or ending in their loser-out playoff game at Houston.

Omegawave training is popular in European soccer, where a majority of Champions League clubs used it. The method migrated to Seattle through Chelsea FC, which used the Seahawks' training facility in Renton before its July 18 friendly with the Sounders.

At the request of Sounders coach Sigi Schmid, Tenney investigated and arranged for Omegawave representatives to travel up from their Portland headquarters to make a presentation.

"One of the strengths of Sigi is that he's always learning, and he's always looking at a level above where he's working and what they're doing to be successful," Tenney said. "... I think he's always looking for little advantages and little ways to make the training process better. In this league, with smaller rosters and with the parity, the managing of fatigue and the fitness of the roster over the year does become so crucial."

One immediate problem was that the Sounders lacked Omegawave equipment. So they turned to Joel Jamieson, who had previously worked on the training staffs at the University of Washington and with the Seahawks. Jamieson, who is now owner and director of EndZone Athletics in Kirkland, agreed to let the Sounders use his equipment there.

"It's a tool, and it offers a lot of feedback," Jamieson said. "And the more you get used to using it, the more you learn how to apply what it's telling you. As long as you have an open mind that this thing really is able to give you valuable information, and then if you're willing to put that to use, you'll see the results and you'll become a believer in it."

Tenney said Sounders FC has enough belief to be considering an investment in its own equipment for next season.

Until then, he said the belief of the 12 to 15 players who use the program is reflected in their willingness to make regular trips to Kirkland to be tested.

And no one on the club is more of a believer than Evans, whose recent upturn in performance coincides with his introduction to Omegawave.

"I started about three weeks after the Gold Cup, probably," he said. "I started during – for whatever reason – a dip in performance and (when I) just wasn't doing very well. I kind of looked at why, got involved with the Omegawave training, went in there and got some personalized training.

"And ever since, I've been feeling better every week. I'm a firm believer now."

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