

# National Academy of Sports Vision Meeting '88

## Sports Vision in Europe

It is a honor and a pleasure for me to represent Italy at this meeting and I want to thank Dr. Garner for giving me the opportunity to be here.

In Europe, Sports Vision is really young and in most of the European Countries, Optometrists do not know about its philosophies and purposes. The first Italian optometric experience in the field of sports has been carried by myself and two colleagues in 1985.

During that year we checked a group of 42 semi-professional motor-cross drivers. Eighteen of them (42%) failed the Sports Vision Examination Protocol developed by Dr. Reickow and Dr. Coffee at Pacific University, Oregon. The visual problems we found were:

- 2 abnormal color vision
- 3 undiagnosed refractive error
- 1 ocular pressure above normal
- 16 poor contrast sensitivity
- 8 unaided visual acuity under 20/20

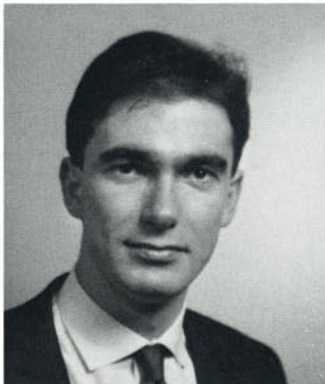
In 1985 and 1986 we distributed a questionnaire to athletes within three Tennis Clubs and we received 152 answers. We learned that 42.3% of the tennis players do not check their visual condition regularly, at least every two years.

Government Health Service in most of the European Countries is not computerized and at this time we do not have detailed statistics regarding trauma in sports. Because there is a lack of education and products to prevent visual trauma during sports, we suppose that the percentage of injuries are at least the same (or more) of what happens in the U.S.A. or in Canada. A tremendous amount of work has to be done to introduce Sports Vision concepts and to educate how to protect eyes during sports.

Behavioral Optometry is now getting more and more popular but the Optometrists following its concepts are less than 10%. Thanks to OEP Foundation and to few American and Canadian Behavioral Optometrists, Visual Training is now a topic during European courses and seminars.

When I started to be involved in Sports Vision, I did not realize the interesting

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and exciting aspects of this field of Optometry. The National Academy of Sports Vision has been my first approach and helped me to better understand all the aspects of this field. At this time I am convinced that the opportunity to collaborate with psychologists, ophthalmologists and kinesiologists is a great challenge for the optometric profession and put the optometrists in a very important position.

During the last two years I spent most of my time and energies in developing and organizing a Sports Vision Information Center in Italy. I have been lucky enough to reach the attention of powerful and very motivated people like Dr. Dal Pozzo and Eng. Flammini who planned the organization of the European Academy of Sports Vision. Now the Advisory Board and the Promoting Group of the European Academy include three ophthalmologists, three optometrists, three psychologists and a biomechanical. During the next step we are going to include also some American Optometrists.

Our major targets are:

- Young Athletes Visual Screening
- Prevention of ocular trauma
- Visual Education and Hygiene
- Advanced Sports Vision Evaluation Protocols
- Visual Training
- Courses and Seminars

### The Italian Sports Vision Project

Under the name of Italian Sports Vision Project we have planned a 5 year program which has already started by establishing the first Sports Vision Center

and other two will be connected together within two months.

The Sports Vision Centers will use the same organization, same diagnostic protocols and the same instruments to evaluate and treat the athletes.

A monthly News Letter and different kind of pamphlets will be used to spread Sports Vision Concepts and to reach the attention of different organizations. Our first Research Target will be to develop Specific Sports Vision Protocols to evaluate specific visual skills with regards to the different sports activities. We believe that Sports Vision knowledge might be used also for people with particular visual needs like for example people spending many hours driving.

We are convinced that Sports Vision evaluation and training is mostly based on behavioral optometry and the first evaluation should be done to kids during primary school.

### What do we see in the future?

A big event will come in 1992. Starting from that year, almost all the European Countries will be united without customs between each other, like the U.S.A.

We strongly believe in a connection between The United States and Europe and we think that an International Sports Vision Network is not far to be established.

Sports Vision concepts have a great value because they are slowly changing the instrumentation, the methods and the attitudes of the daily optometric and ophthalmic practices.

Many visual related problems like asthenopia, headaches and visual fatigues can be easily treated without the use of drugs or refractive surgery. In my mind, Sports Vision is not just a way to approach athletes but a great chance to have a different attitude towards visual problems and toward the patients.

The Optometric profession cannot lose the opportunity to play a fundamental role because Sports Vision Evaluation and Training are first of all optometric procedures.