

DAVID LOWES visited Kinesio UK to see for himself the virtues of the unusual looking tape designs worn by sportspeople around the world

IF YOU watched the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2009 IAAF World Athletics Championships from Berlin, I'm sure you would have seen athletes seemingly decorated with different-coloured tapes in a myriad of patterns on shoulders, thighs and calves, and those were just the places the eye could see!

This tape is no gimmick or fashion statement. In fact, the weird and wonderful patterns of Kinesio taping not only ensured that the athletes with niggles reached the event, it meant they finished their respective events in good shape as well.

Athletes such as Brigitte Foster-Hylton, Wallace Spearmon and Germaine Mason all succeeded, when in normal circumstances they may have failed. Spearmon's calf and thigh in particular, looked more akin to Spider-man than athlete.

The product was known to few at that time, but it is now taking the world by storm and indeed at the Olympics many thought athletes had endorsement deals with the company, but that was not the case. Kinesio had simply donated 50,000 rolls of tape to 58 countries and the team therapists took it from there. The tape is used in all sports and even in the pool and many

Kinesio has it taped

Germaine Mason, the Olympic silver medallist, is one of many athletes who wore Kinesio tape in Beijing



Mark Shearman

Long-life: Kinesio tape can be worn for three or four days



top-class sportspeople are wearing the tape underneath their shirts or shorts to make them competitive again, all applied by qualified practitioners.

So what is Kinesio taping? It was developed by Dr Kenzo Kase in Japan more than 30 years ago and is an elastic therapeutic taping procedure which can be used for treatment of muscular disorders and lymphoedema reduction. It treats a wide range of sports injuries, orthopaedic, neuromuscular, neurological and medical conditions. Examples include achilles tendonitis, hamstring injuries, haematoma and bruising, shin splints, tennis elbow and lower-back pain to name a few. The tape allows practitioners to augment treatment of lymphoedema

and chronic swelling by opening up lymphatic pathways and can also be used for conditions such as low tone, hemiplegia (half of a body has compromised motoric functions) and muscle imbalances.

The tape works with four main functions: it reduces pain by taking pain off the pain receptors, eliminates lymphatic fluid/haematomas beneath the skin, adjusts misalignment to aid fascia and muscle function, reconditions abnormal tension and strengthens the muscle.

The Kinesio Taping method involves taping over and around muscles in order to assist, support and prevent over-contraction and is fundamentally different from traditional taping. It allows the practitioner to support muscles while maintaining a full range of motion, which is essential to athletes. It also reduces muscle fatigue, inflammation and pain, corrects posture, adjusts joint mis-alignment and protects against further injury. In cases of bruising and swelling, the tape lifts the skin increasing the space between the fascia and the muscles, which helps promote the flow of lymphatic fluid, thereby helping to reduce oedema and associated swelling.

Kinesio Tex Gold tape has an original wave-patterned adhesive design and offers the following unique features: 140 per cent elasticity matching that of the

skin and is non-restrictive, it can be worn for three to four days, which avoids the need to apply regularly, 100 per cent high-grade cotton which is durable, water resistant, latex-free and allows the skin to breathe, it comes in four different colours of red, blue, black and beige.

Removal of the tape should be done in the direction of the hair growth. There are two different ways to remove the tape: by removing the tape from the skin or removing the skin from the tape. The first method is to roll the tape off using the base of the hand. The other method is pulling the skin gently from the tape with the fingers having soaked it in water or using soap.

It should be noted that Kinesio Taping is a lymph-correction technique that facilitates circulatory and lymphatic flow and it is recommended that only practitioners trained in treating lymphatic disorders and the application of the tape use this technique as a treatment. The tape should only be applied under the guidance of a practitioner and Kinesio UK recommends that patients should consult a qualified practitioner before self-application.

There are some amazing other uses for Kinesio Taping and one of these is assisting over the term of a pregnancy with the reduction of lymphedema in the legs, supporting the abdomen which often leads to over-straining of the stomach and back muscles and can cause problems in the lumbo-sacral region and reducing irritation of the sacroiliac region.

■ **FOR more product information go to: www.kinesiotaping.co.uk**

Kinesio taping is not a fashion statement. Instead, it is used to treat injuries and improve performance

