IJSPT
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SPORTS PHYSICAL THERAPY

Voight M, Wilk KE, Mangine RE, Page P. Russ Paine, PT: In Memoriam. *IJSPT*. 2026;21(4):348-351. doi:10.26603/001c.159189

Editorial

# Russ Paine, PT: In Memoriam

Michael Voight, PT, DHSc, SCS, OCS, ATC, CSCS, FAPTA, Kevin E. Wilk, PT, DPT, FAPTA, Robert E. Mangine, PT, ATC, Med, Phil Page, PhD, PT, ATC, CSCS, CP-MSK, FACSM

Keywords: russ paine, memorial, obituary

https://doi.org/10.26603/001c.159189

International Journal of Sports Physical Therapy

Vol. 21, Issue 4, 2026



The sports physical therapy community lost a cherished colleague and dear friend with the sudden and unexpected passing of Russ Paine, PT, on March 12th. Russ was more than an exceptional clinician and respected leader in sports medicine—he was a trusted mentor, a loyal colleague, and someone whose friendship meant a great deal to many of us across this profession. Those fortunate enough to know Russ quickly recognized his generous spirit and unwavering willingness to help others. His passing leaves a profound void in our community, yet the influence he had on colleagues, students, and friends will continue to resonate throughout sports physical therapy for years to come.

Russ has served as the Director of Rehabilitation and Sports Medicine in the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at McGovern Medical School at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth). After earning his undergraduate degree from Abilene Christian University and his physical therapy degree from Texas Woman's University, Russ dedicated his career to advancing the field of sports rehabilitation. Early in his professional development, he trained and worked with David Drez, MD, in Lake Charles, Louisiana—an experience that helped shape his clinical approach and lifelong passion for sports medicine. Since 1991, Russ worked closely with sports medicine physicians in the Houston area while maintaining a busy clinical practice, contributing to research and education, and mentoring countless clinicians entering the profession.

Throughout his distinguished career, Russ became widely respected as one of the leading sports physical therapists in the United States. He served as a rehabilitation consultant to the Houston Astros, Houston Rockets, various PGA golf professionals, and NASA, reflecting the confidence placed in his expertise by elite organizations and athletes alike. In addition to his clinical practice, Russ remained deeply committed to advancing knowledge within sports physical therapy. He lectured extensively both nationally and internationally, presenting at more than 500 professional meetings, and authored over 25 textbook chapters and more than 30 peer-reviewed research publications. His clinical interests focused particularly on knee and shoulder injuries, as well as golf-related injuries and conditioning.

Russ was also deeply engaged in professional service and leadership. He served on the planning committee for the Sports Physical Therapy Section Traveling Fellowship and Team Concept Meeting, helping shape educational opportunities that influenced generations of sports physical therapists. Russ was also a founding member of the ICCUS Society, an organization built on collaboration, professional development, and lasting friendships among leaders in sports medicine.

One of the traditions Russ cherished most within ICCUS was organizing the annual golf outing. In true Russ fashion, he enthusiastically encouraged everyone to participate regardless of their skill level. For Russ, the event was never about the scorecard—it was about bringing colleagues together, strengthening friendships, and enjoying the camaraderie that defines our professional community. Those who participated quickly realized that these moments on the golf course reflected Russ' larger philosophy about the profession: that relationships and shared experiences are as important to our field as scientific advancement.

Russ' professional contributions were widely recognized. In 2009, he received the Dale Baker Career Service Award from the American Sports Medicine Institute, presented by Dr. James Andrews, in recognition of his outstanding service to sports medicine. In 2018, Russ was inducted into the Sports Physical Therapy Hall of Fame, an honor reflecting










his decades of leadership, mentorship, and commitment to advancing sports rehabilitation.

Russ also played an important role in the growth and development of the International Journal of Sports Physical Therapy (IJSPT). As a member of the Editorial Board and an important contributor to the IJSPT Advisory Board, Russ provided considerable counsel and support during key periods of the journal's development. His thoughtful insight, professional perspective, and steady encouragement helped guide the journal as it evolved into one of the leading publications in sports rehabilitation. Russ was always willing to help—whether through manuscript review, professional guidance, or encouragement of initiatives designed to strengthen the journal's mission.

As the field of sports physical therapy continues to evolve, the legacy of leaders like Russ Paine will remain a guiding force. His commitment to mentorship, education, and professional collaboration helped build the foundation upon which future generations of sports physical therapists will stand. Russ believed deeply in the responsibility of experienced clinicians to invest in the next generation of professionals. He often reminded young therapists that "our profession moves forward when we take the time to help someone else move forward." Through his mentorship, encouragement, and generosity with his time, Russ helped shape the careers of countless sports physical therapists.

As we reflect on Russ' life and career, what stands out most is not only the remarkable professional accomplishments he achieved, but the countless relationships he built along the way. Russ had a rare ability to bring people together—to mentor young clinicians, support colleagues, and encourage collaboration across our profession. Russ connected with people and made them feel valued. He understood that the strength of sports physical therapy lies not only in scientific advancement, but also in the commu-









nity of professionals committed to helping athletes and patients perform at their best. The clinicians he mentored, the colleagues he encouraged, and the friendships he cultivated will continue to shape our profession for years to come.

Above all, Russ was a devoted husband & father to his loving wife Dr Shan Paine, children Ross, Ryan & Morgan. His family was central to his life, and the friendships he formed throughout his career were genuine and lasting.

He was a loyal friend, a generous colleague, and someone who genuinely cared about the success and well-being of others. Whether mentoring young clinicians, collaborating with colleagues, or spending time with friends on the golf course, Russ approached life with warmth, humility, and enthusiasm. There is a quote often attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson that seems especially fitting when reflecting on Russ' life: "When you were born, you were crying and everyone around you was smiling. Live your life so that when you die, you are the one smiling and everyone around you is crying." Russ lived that kind of life. His influence will live on through the many professionals he inspired, the ideas he shared, and the example he set for what it means to serve both patients and the profession with humility and dedication. To know Russ was to know what true friendship looked like—steady, sincere, and unwavering. Russ was a friend to all he met and was always there to help colleagues, friends & neighbors. While we mourn his passing, we also celebrate a life that made our profession stronger, more connected, and better prepared for the future. Russ will be deeply missed, but his influence will continue to be felt throughout the sports physical therapy community for many years to come.



The true measure of a professional life is the people it inspires, and by that measure, Russ Paine leaves a legacy that will endure throughout the sports physical therapy community for many years to come.

On behalf of the entire IJSPT and ICCUS family, you are forever loved and deeply missed.

Your friends,

*Mike Voight, Kevin Wilk, Bob Mangine, and Phil Page*

Published: April 01, 2026 CDT.
© The Author(s)

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CCBY-NC-4.0). View this license's legal deed at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0 and legal code at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode for more information.