

Dirt bike racer from St. Clair, 17, got an early start. **MOTOR SPORTS 3C**



Ritzenhein will enjoy tonight's 10,000-meter finals. **OLYMPICS 6C**



Madalyn Ruggiero/Special to The Detroit News

Da-I Shudo Ping helps Kevin Jones, who is showing no signs of his right knee injury.

JONES' REHAB MENTOR

Holistic medicine practitioner Ping pushes former Lions running back.

By DAVID GORICKI
The Detroit News

SALINE — On a hot, humid summer day, Da-I Shudo Ping is sitting in a cart on the Brookside Golf Course.

The scene would be a normal one if Ping were enjoying the day while golfing. Instead, he was busy at work as a sports agent and trainer, directing a workout for former Lions running back Kevin Jones and two of his clients, veteran offensive lineman Barry Stokes and rookie linebacker Patrick Bailey, who soon will be in the Steelers' training camp.

A representative of the Dolphins organization is standing near Ping, getting a glimpse of Jones' recovery from a serious knee injury.

Jones, who was cut by the Lions in March, had major surgery on his right knee Dec. 29 and has been working out under Ping's care since February. He was told by doctors that it would take up to 10 months to get back on the field, but Jones is showing no signs of the injury six months after the operation.

Jones participates in a number of drills. He's timed by the

"He's a beautiful person. He gets gratification out of helping people. That's why he has so many good friends. He's genuine. I can trust him. He's like family."

KEVIN JONES, on Da-I Shudo Ping

Jones

Continued from Page 1C

Dolphins' representative at 4:27 in the shuttle run, a side-to-side drill that displays his cutting ability. He runs a quarter-mile in under a minute and shows his explosiveness by sprinting the 40 meters on a hilly incline.

The Dolphins representative leaves impressed with Jones' progress. Jones is just happy with his decision to put his trust in Ping, who has been an NFL agent for more than 25 years.

"He's a beautiful person," said Jones of Ping, who is not his agent. "He gets gratification out of helping people. That's why he has so many good friends. He's genuine. I can trust him. He's like family."

Jones was introduced to Ping — known as Dr. Ping for his work as a holistic-medicine practitioner — by Stokes nearly a year ago. Jones was seeking treatment for a foot injury that was supposed to idle him for the first four games of the season. Jones was given heat acupuncture by Ping and returned to the field in half the time.

"I didn't know what to expect when I first met him. I mean, here's this big Asian guy," Jones said of Ping, who holds the title of Shihan, the highest ranking of the martial arts of Jishukan-Ryu Jujitsu. "Then, we get to talking and he explains what we're going to do."

"I had trust in him since Barry came back from back surgery to play."

Surprising call

Ping was surprised when he received a phone call from Jones' mother just after his surgery.

"His mother called and said, 'Are you ready to take care of my son,'" Ping recalled. "That kind of shocked me. I said, 'Sure.' I felt since he had the best surgeon in the world in Dr. (James) Andrews that I could handle the rest."

"When I first met with Kevin after his surgery I asked him how serious he was about it (come-back). I told him thousands of people are waiting for him to fall flat on his face. I said, 'You have to do everything I ask you to do.' He said he would and he never buckled. My job has been easy because of his strong desire to get back. He's motivated and coachable."

"Sure, he had his moments (of doubt). His mental state was good until the first day he ran on May 1st. He jogged from here to there (pointing to a fence less than 30 yards away). It was such an awakening. It shocked him. There was so much pain involved, both physically and mentally. He felt it would be easier since he lifted weights since February. He gradually got better and now look at him. You'd never know he was hurt."

Jones worked out six days a



Photos by Madalyn Ruggiero/Special to The Detroit News

Kevin Jones checks with Dr Da-I Shudo Ping at Brookside Golf Course in Saline. Jones worked out Saturday for four NFL teams.

week with a mixture of weights; swimming, running and martial arts sessions in Ping's dojo room. He also had a series of heat acupuncture sessions.

"I think I can be a great player," said Jones, who rushed for 1,133 yards on 241 carries his rookie season in 2004 but never matched the numbers the last three years.

"I've overcome adversity. You just have to get up one more time than you've fallen. I can't wait to get back and play on Sundays again. I love the NFL. I want to get back in the locker room and help a team get to the playoffs."

Jones worked out for four NFL teams Saturday, including the Lions, who were represented by Sheldon White, the director of pro personnel.

Now, Jones is waiting for the call to return to the NFL.

Interesting journey

Ping's family left China for Bangkok, then to Taiwan to escape the Chinese communist government.

His father, a military general, feared for his son's safety and arranged for him to live in the United States. His parents sent him to the U.S. in 1956, when he was 9.

He bounced around from several foster homes in Missouri before joining the Marine Corps, where he was a fullback on the football team.

Ping studied at Sophia University in Tokyo, where he met his wife. They moved to Ypsilanti and had four children. He attended Eastern Michigan, majoring in education.

Ping, who has operated martial arts dojos, places of instruction, since 1973, was an elementary teacher in Ypsilanti when former NFL end Rodney Holman asked him to become his agent in 1982.

"I coached Rodney in Little League in the Ypsilanti area when he was 11 or 12," Ping said.

"After high school, he came to me and asked for assistance on where he should play college football. He was a Parade All-American tight end with scholarship offers from Michigan, Ohio State, Nebraska, Southern Cal and Tulane. I told him that he should make the choice with his parents, but they told him to come see me. We decided he should go to Tulane."

"Well, I didn't hear from Rodney until a few years later when he came knocking on my door, saying 'I'd like you to represent me.' I said, 'Represent you for what?' Well, he said he wanted me to be his agent. I said, 'I'm no football agent,' and he said, 'You are now.'"

Ping represented Holman, who was a third-round pick of the Bengals in 1982, and that was the start of his career as a sports agent. Holman went on to enjoy a 14-year career, playing in Super Bowl XXIII.

"We go way back, since Little League," said Holman from his home in Slidell, La., a city located 30 miles from New Orleans and still recovering from Hurricane Katrina. "I wanted Doc to represent me because I knew I could trust him. I felt comfortable with him. I knew he always had my best interests at heart."

Defensive back Lionel Washington, a teammate of Holman's at Tulane, joined Ping in 1983 and had a 15-year playing career. His son, Deron, was a second-round pick of the Pistons last week.

Robert Lyles of TCU had Ping represent him in 1984 and went on to an eight-year career with Houston and Atlanta. He's now an assistant coach at Army.

Ping has attended every Super Bowl since 1986, watching his clients: Holman (Bengals), Isaac Holt (Cowboys), Eddie Fuller (Bills) and Israel Idonije (Bears) compete on pro football's biggest stage.



Steelers rookie linebacker Patrick Bailey, left, and ex-Lions running back Kevin Jones get their running in as part of rehab work at Brookside Golf Course in Saline.