

MATT RYAN AND THE HEROES OF TOMORROW

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FOR THE HEROES
OF TODAY,
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BLOOD SIMPLE

MARLINS OUTFIELDER CODY ROSS

spent most of 2007 plagued by a gimpy hamstring that just wouldn't heal. Seeking a permanent fix, he limped to the Steadman Hawkins Clinic in Colorado and received a platelet-rich plasma injection. During the procedure, a patient's blood is drawn, and both his platelets and the protein thrombin—which stimulates healing—are isolated. The nurturing cells are then injected back into the wound. "Inflamed tissue won't heal if an athlete keeps playing on it," says David Karli, a Steadman Hawkins specialist. "This is a healing boost."

Ross took just that one shot, did some rehab and stayed healthy all of 2008, tallying career highs in games, taters and RBIs. He isn't the only one to have benefited from a PRP tune-up. Stanford DT James McGillicuddy used the procedure to overcome a ruptured patella tendon and played for the first time in three years, while Dodgers closer Takashi Saito staved off Tommy John surgery in July by quick-fixing his partially torn UCL. Karli says that's just the beginning for these types of procedures: "We're looking at manipulating stem cells in conjunction with PRP. It's an evolution." And a man-made one at that. -CHARLES CURTIS