**Pillars of ESSKA.**

ESSKA likes to honour the men that have been the pillars of Sports Medicine in Europe. In this issue we will focus on Prof. Karl Peter Benedetto, President of the ESSKA from 2004 to 2006.

**INTERVIEWING PROF. KARL PETER BENEDETTO**

by Matteo Denti

Could you please resume your curriculum? When did you decide to be an orthopaedic surgeon? Could you tell us your history concerning orthopaedics?

When I finished medical school it was 1976 and I started doing the general curriculum; by that time I had been trained for orthopaedics, general surgery and some trauma surgery and I found it much more interesting being a trauma surgeon because there was some more action compared to orthopaedic surgery, which was slightly boring and repetitive.

Two years later I went to the University Hospital in Innsbruck to start my training as a trauma surgeon, to work there and also to be trained in neuro surgery, which from the technical standpoint I found very fascinating. Nevertheless sports traumatology was my main interest because patients were highly motivated to recover: this was why I focused on trauma surgery and sports traumatology.

How did you start doing arthroscopy?

When I was in Innsbruck and started there in 1978 there was an orthopaedic department and they had an arthroscope, but they did not use it. My boss was a famous professor for hand surgery, who had been trained very conservatively regarding trauma. So it took us one year to convince him that we needed an arthroscope. When we had the first arthroscope we started doing arthroscopy in our patients and there was no camera at that time, so you had been standing for one hour in a dark room, just looking in the way you look at stars. Nevertheless it really became very fascinating.

Then I organized myself a fellowship in the United States. I just took two years of my holidays. I read the literature, I was looking forward doing knee surgery and arthroscopy when I was looking through the JBJS and at all those people because there was no fax available at that time, therefore I wrote letters forward and backward. Afterwards I organized a trip for three months and in 1982 I was with Bill Clancy in Madison Wisconsin doing ACL reconstruction. I was in Boston with Bert Terrin and his partner was Bill Wily, who was doing shoulder arthroscopy. So, when Bert Terrin was out, I went to Bill Wily and started doing shoulder arthroscopy. I also went to L.A. I did a lot of training at that time and when I was coming back we went to anatomy where I had a quite good affiliation. We worked on cadavers and started doing arthroscopy mainly in the knee and in the shoulder, tried to do different techniques and started doing arthroscopic Bankart procedure, introducing some instruments which were at that time produced by Storz and we did one of the first arthroscopic Bankart repair. This was in 1984.

How did you discover ESSKA?

In 1983 there was one meeting in Zurich, which was the foundation meeting of the German speaking Arthroscopy Association. There had been about a hundred people and this was quite interesting because everyone was focused on the same topic. Then there was a knee meeting in Berlin with great names like W. Mueller, Kenneth De Haven, Roland Jakob whom I knew already at that time. Then I decided to go to Berlin, and that was for me, as a young guy, one of the most outstanding meetings because in those years there was nothing available elsewhere and this was really great and I was so ambitious. That is when I affiliated with ESSKA. From that moment on I have been at every ESSKA meeting that has ever been held.

I know you were in 1987 a travelling fellow and then a godfather as the ESSKA president. What do you think about the travelling fellowship?

I think that creating this fellowship is one of the greatest innovations that ESSKA has ever done combined with...
AOSSM and Werner Mueller and John Feagin, because at that time for young people it was really extraordinary to travel somewhere as normally you did not get support. I would just like to remind that in 1982 I had to organize everything myself, I had to pay everything myself. But when this fellowship was coming up this was just a unique opportunity to see what was going on in the field but it was also the beginning of getting a lot of good friends, of having a good medical but also social network.

Tell me something about your life and the Ski National Team. You were chief orthopaedic doctor for many years.

I have been a sports guy ever since, practicing ice hockey, some soccer, some ski and Emil Raas was the medical director of the Austrian Ski Federation. He is located in Innsbruck as an internist and he is actually a close friend. He asked me whether we could take care of the ski athletes which is a small group of people: I accepted with enthusiasm. Indeed at the university it is easier to get some time for travelling with the skiers. I was travelling every year at least two or three races and I had been with the Olympics and at the World Championship with the Austrian Ski Federation. It has always been great.

You were President of ESSKA: tell me something about your experience.

I think that being President of ESSKA is one of the greatest highlights you can achieve in a medical career as an orthopaedic or trauma surgeon because it is an outstanding society of great people and it is just fantastic being a chairman of a lot of good friends focused on working for one society. Our aim has always been to make the society greater, more important and making it the number one society in the world in the field of sports traumatology, arthroscopy and knee surgery.

What do you think about ESSKA today and in the future?

There is no doubt that ESSKA is the most important society in Europe regarding the fields of sports traumatology, arthroscopy, knee surgery, shoulder surgery. For me it is certainly more important than AOSSM and if you compare the meetings between AOSSM and ESSKA from the scientific standpoint, then certainly ESSKA is the number one, there is no doubt. And also if you compare them to the ISAKOS meetings, there is significant more attendance at ESSKA, which is certainly number one again. ESSKA is well known all over the world, not only in Europe and North America but also in South America and in the rest of Pacific region. So, we have gone really on the top of scientific organizations.

And this is because you work a lot for ESSKA.

No, it is not only me. The boarders are outstanding people and everyone has been working on ESSKA. There has not been one meeting that I remember when one of the board members did not show up. Everyone took their time for our society, which had priority on that weekend; they could have done anything else, but no one has ever missed an ESSKA board meeting.

The last question: what about your future programmes, your career and your future dreams?

From my personal standpoint I am still interested in arthroscopy, I still do a lot of knee surgery and I have slightly moved to the complex knee interest as knee dislocation, which is just a great challenge. Indeed I think in time you always want to get a step forward; it is fantastic to do an ACL, it is even more fantastic to do a recent case but one of the biggest challenges is certainly doing a complex knee instability. Fortunately I had a lot of fractures doing arthroscopic fracture treatment and this field has to be certainly studied, worked and spread out as there is undoubtedly great benefit in doing the fracture treatment arthroscopically. Though there is chance that in general orthopaedic surgeons in Europe are less trained in doing trauma surgery, so this what they are still missing.

Thank you very much for what you did, for developing arthroscopy, orthopaedics and sports medicine in Europe. Thank you.

I would like to thank the society, giving me the opportunity to reach a big goal and to make my dreams come true and I also would like to thank the society for having a significant number of good friends that I see several times a year when I go to the different meetings.