

Sports stars using mouthguard created by Truro, N.S., dentist;

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Anil Makkar has the unusual habit of looking for photos of professional athletes with their tongues stuck out.

They could be future clients for the Nova Scotia-based dentist, who has developed unique mouthguards meant to unleash strength by relaxing the wearer's jaw - much like sticking out your tongue.

Whether they know it or not, he says, some athletes could be improving their game just by opening wide and giving their best Gene Simmons impression.

"One of the most relaxed positions of your jaw is when your jaw is basically down and forward from your skull. The act of sticking your tongue out does that for you," says Makkar, who practises in Truro, about an hour's drive northeast of Halifax.

"Some of the best athletes in the world, in crucial times, will stick out their tongue: Kobe Bryant of the Lakers always does it; Tiger Woods always does it; Tom Brady of the New England Patriots, six months ago on the cover of Sports Illustrated, had his tongue out while he was throwing the ball."

Makkar, who's trained in neuromuscular dentistry, began developing the mouthguard several years ago after patients fitted with a similar piece to treat temporomandibular joint (TMJ) pain began telling him they felt stronger.

The so-called Pure Power Mouthguard, which can cost up to \$2,000, doesn't make anyone stronger, says Makkar, but it "unlocks your potential."

"The jaw joint is actually the focus of power in the body because that is the most used joint in the whole body," he says.

"So what we're basically doing is trying to find the most comfortable position of that lower jaw. ... It relaxes all the muscles in the face and allows you use more of your upper and lower body strength."

The mouthguards, which are manufactured in Calgary, now grace the gums of eight PGA golfers, Dallas Cowboys receiver Terrell Owens, Shaquille O'Neal of the Phoenix Suns, Los Angeles Lakers forward Lamar Odom, and more than 200 other professional athletes.

Only certified dentists in Canada, the United States, Australia and Singapore can fit a client for the mouthpiece.

Makkar, CEO of Pure Power Athletics Inc., says no athletes have been given money to endorse the product, but there are plans for paid endorsements in the near future.

The product has already been given a major boost thanks to Manny Ramirez of the L.A. Dodgers.

Ramirez appeared on the Oct. 13 cover of Sports Illustrated sporting the mouthguard, and can also be found on the Pure Power Athletics' website.

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