

Game Ready eyes bigger market



(Jason Steinberg/Special to The Examiner)
Nutnaree Pippit-Suksun recently had reconstructive ACL surgery.

Kate Williamson, The Examiner
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SAN FRANCISCO -

San Francisco Ballet soloist Nutnaree Pipit-Suksun tore a ligament in her right knee during a March rehearsal, an injury that knocked her out of the remainder of the ballet's season. But it has been healing remarkably quickly, she said, and she attributes that in part to a portable device that wraps her limb, providing both chill and repetitive compression to her knee.

"It allows you to do ice and compression, because the cuff will inflate and deflate," ballet Medical Administrator Floriana Alessandria said. "So it's much more effective than throwing an ice pack on something."

Such testimonials are typical for Coolsystems Inc., the Berkeley-based maker of the Game Ready System device. For years, the company has been steadily growing its business among sports teams such as the Golden State Warriors, as well as among physical therapists, clinics, dancers and others. This week, though, the company began moving into a bigger pond.

Coolsystems has made a deal with a national health-care device firm that will help it move into the much larger market of patients recovering from surgery, CEO Tom Oliver said.

Under the deal, Coolsystems will rent Game Ready devices to OrthoRehab, a subsidiary of German prosthetics giant Otto Bock HealthCare. OrthoRehab, in turn, rents to patients who've been prescribed the device and receives reimbursement from insurers.

It's a new stage of growth for Coolsystems, which is commonly known as Game Ready and Game Ready Equine, its branch that makes recovery devices for horses. Founded in 1997 by a former U.S. Air Force pilot and scientist now unaffiliated with the firm, Game Ready has had many ups and downs, from generous venture funding to a 2005 fire that destroyed its office and inventory.

"I was amazed at how the team really worked together and supported each other to make this thing go," Oliver said.

Game Ready had between \$10 million and \$12 million in human-device sales and about \$3 million in horse-device sales in 2006, Oliver said. The firm hopes to turn its first profit this year.

The device for humans has two parts. The first is a red box that plugs into a wall and is filled with water and ice. The second is an attachable wrap designed for a specific body part, such as the knee or shoulder.

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Would you use a Game Ready recovery device?

Share your comments below.

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