

*Following is an unsolicited, unedited testimonial from a Juilliard Pre-College Student, written April 3, 2018, after using a poly-pad for two months. He wrote again in July and October (now as a first-year student of Patinka Kopec at Manhattan School of Music) to order more sizes and colors of poly-pads for comparison.*

I came across the Poly-Pad after a startling encounter with tendinitis in my left inner elbow (also known as golfer's elbow). I remember feeling the pain initially in a rehearsal, disregarding it as just my arm getting tired, and then getting the pain a week later in an hour and a half long orchestra concert. It was unlike any other pain I'd ever experienced. Just merely lifting the instrument would send an "electric-shock" sensation down my arm. I remember how afraid I was of the possibility of getting tendinitis right before college auditions, the denial, the prospect of having to take a gap year before being able to audition again. It was late November so I still had time. My initial thoughts were, What am I doing wrong? I've been improving my technique since the start of this year (not to mention that my teacher prioritizes comfort and relaxation over all else).

I had to take two months off from playing. After weeks of physical therapy and no viola-playing, the pain was barely present. Those were the hardest two months of my life. My instrument, as for most musicians, was a part of me, of my voice and my essential being. I recall not even knowing what to do with myself at times, unable to play my instrument and having to fill my day with other things to distract myself from what was happening.

Finally, I recovered by the end of January just in time for February, a month of 6 daunting conservatory auditions in front of me. Never again I thought to myself will I ever allow myself to get injured as I did before. With that thought, I immediately turned to my setup, could it have been this that triggered the problem? I had a bean-shaped shoulder rest with an oddly-shaped chinrest. After taking a closer look, I noticed how constricting it was – the shoulder rest was restricting my entire shoulder's movement, and even further, I noticed that whenever I began to lift the viola to play, my shoulder would roll forward in a tense position, as if automatically submitting to the tension it was about to put itself through.

Next I tried a Kun, which seemed to be the standard for most of my colleagues. I bought one of the more supposedly "high end" (not to mention, particularly expensive) wooden ones, in hopes of finally finding an end to this seemingly endless "search for the right setup." It felt rigid, but slightly more comfortable than my previous shoulder rest, so I figured it was only a matter of time before I adjusted properly.

It was days later when, in a trial lesson with violist Sheila Browne, my attention was once again drawn to my new, but flawed Kun setup, which I was told was constricting an essential group of nerves/tendons in my shoulder that are responsible for every finger/wrist/arm movement I needed to play. She then recommended something softer and less disruptive to my shoulder movement, the Poly-Pad.

I have been using the Poly-Pad for 2 months now and I am almost certain that it will be the only kind of shoulder rest/pad that I will use for the rest of my playing career. There are just so many things that make it the ideal shoulder rest for any violin-violin player:

1. It is soft. After my experience with tendinitis and countless hours analyzing what was the source of my pain and having tried countless rigid shoulder rests, I believe that the shoulder should not come in contact with anything that is hard. This restricts movement and makes the nerves/tendons have to work harder to push down the strings. The Poly-Pad eliminates this problem because of its soft, comfortable texture.
2. It frees up the shoulder. The poly-pad comes in contact with the "fleshy" part of the shoulder and doesn't block up the "bony" part of the shoulder that is essential to all left arm/hand movement.
3. It is flexible and infinitely adjustable. The poly-pad teaches the user not to support the instrument with solely his/her neck by being flexible and actually adjusts while playing. If the user wishes to keep the pad in the same place, they may, or if they wish to let it move freely, it is up to them.
4. It does what a shoulder rest/pad is SUPPOSED to do. The purpose of putting anything between the shoulder and the instrument is to fill the space between the two and nothing more. The poly-pad doesn't "cut-into" the shoulder as other rests do and achieves the goal of the shoulder rest by doing so.

The poly-pad has saved me from future playing injuries that I might have encountered again had I not had the good fortune of running into it. I cannot thank you enough creating such a simple and remarkable product. To me, it is the most sensible design for a shoulder rest out there and I think that it should be in every violin shop that sells such products. I recommend it to all of my colleagues whenever I find the opportunity. Truly, truly life-changing product.

*David Padilla, 17-year-old Violist, Juilliard Pre-College Student*