

Training Days

Student athletic trainers bring helping hands to the college sports scene

By Jesse Wright
THE BATTALION

Monday morning begins early for Jennifer Murphy, a sophomore kinesiology major. The 16 hours of classes she is enrolled in start at 8 a.m. and continue without a break until 2 p.m. After her last class, Murphy must rush across campus to the Texas A&M Varsity Tennis Center, where she spends the remainder of the afternoon at practice. Murphy does not play tennis at A&M. She is one of many student athletic trainers who submit themselves to hectic schedules day in and day out.

Student trainers are at every practice and game, often traveling with the team. Their performance does not take place on a field or a court, but on the sidelines. Although often unseen, what the student athletic trainers contribute is vital.

March is National Athletic Trainers Month, with injury prevention as the theme. According to the National Athletic Trainers Association, injury prevention and physical activity must go hand in hand for an athlete to be at his or her very best.

Jay Martin, a staff athletic trainer for women's tennis and soccer at Texas A&M, said prevention is the main focus of athletic training. She said weather conditions, field conditions and hydration are some of the many factors that must be monitored to prevent athletic injuries.

Cathy Delafield, a sophomore kinesiology major, said there are often some odd, but necessary, steps athletic trainers must take for the welfare of the athletes.

"When we travel with soccer, we have to walk the entire field looking for dips, sprinkler heads and even ant hills," Delafield said. Delafield said small things, like ant hills, can become mountains if not dealt with properly. Sprains, pains and tragedy can result from lack of prevention.

"Kids die on the field almost every year from dehydration. It's up to us to make sure our athletes stay hydrated, especially in the Texas heat," Martin said.

Martin said the extra hours athletic trainers put in walking fields, setting out and picking up equipment, along with countless other tasks, equals or exceeds the amount of time athletes put in at the weight room.

Martin said to practice as an athletic trainer in Texas, one must put in a lot of hours. To obtain a license, one must take seven training-related classes, complete a 1,800-hour internship and pass the state license exam, all within three to five years.

The time contributed by student athletic trainers at A&M points toward the internship. Depending on the sport and time of season, student trainers contribute at least three and often six or



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more hours a day.

"Delafield said she has no problem dealing with the extra time and effort to be a student athletic trainer."

"Even though it sounds like the hours are horrible, you can't do it and be happy unless you have a passion for what you are doing," Delafield said.



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