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Adams: a jack of all trades

He hasn't scored any touchdowns, blocked any punts, or sunk any free throws for the Oregon Ducks, but he is one of the keys to how well Oregon performs in the athletic arena.

While Dean Adams can influence how well the Ducks do on a given weekend, his real job is to determine which athletes may not be able to play their role during a given week. As head trainer at Oregon, Adams oversees the treatment of every athlete who bleeds lemon and green.

It's a full job, and then some.

"Most people don't understand what an athletic trainer really is," says Adams of his profession. "They tend to compare it with a horse trainer."

Adams does not train horses. But his job as medicine man for Oregon's wounded soldiers has him doing just about everything else under the sun. One minute he'll be studying X-rays, and the next he'll be consulting an injured athlete or pouring over piles of paper work.

"It varies," Adams says of his job. "You do everything from looking at injured athletes, to being a communicator with coaches and athletes, and a counselor guiding them along." And there is always the paperwork.

"It's unbelievable," he says. "You have to try to justify everything you order and you have to keep costs down."

But while keeping costs down, he must also try to keep the athletes on their feet.

"My main concern is the athlete himself," says Adams. "The goal of the trainer is to try to get athletes back to participating as soon as possible without taking any chances."

But sometimes the athletes don't agree with Adams about what is best for them.

"If going back (into action) too soon might get them knocked out for two or three more weeks, then I have to keep them out," Adams says. That is when he puts on another hat and serves the role of counselor for the athlete.

Counseling injured athletes is one of the newer roles for trainers according to Adams, who is in his 15th year as a head trainer.

"The attitude of athletes has changed," Adams says. "Today people want to know exactly what is wrong with them and what it's

going to take to get back to play. When I first started in athletics it wasn't that way."

One thing Adams wishes he could change is the amount of time he spends on the job. During the spring and fall, with football in full swing, he will put in 10 to 12 hours a day "with only five or 10 minutes to eat a sandwich."

Football is the only sport that Adams serves as the main trainer for, but it keeps him hopping.

Adams, who came to Oregon from Hawaii where he served as head trainer at the University of Hawaii-Manoa in Honolulu, starts his morning by making the daily injury report for head coach Rich Brooks. That report lists all players with injuries and whether or not they will be able to practice. Once that and the other administrative details are out of the way, he is ready to attend to the athletes.

Practice starts at 3 p.m., but players have meetings to attend before that time so they start drifting in to the Athletic Treatment Center in the basement of McArthur Court between 11:30 a.m. and noon. So much for lunch.

By the time the treatment has been wrapped up, it is time to pack up and head to Autzen Stadium for the three hours of practice. "It gets to be redundant," he says.

There is also pressure involved.

Pressure comes from a number of sources. Time constraints, dealing with injured players, and working with coaches who want their athletes ready to play, all contribute to the stress of the job. And, Adams adds, there is the pressure of the sport itself.

"There is a football game every week and you have to have everybody ready to play."

It makes for a hectic life at times, so what kind of person would do this job?

"You have to be very patient, motivated, and you have to maintain the enthusiasm of performing all those things," says Adams. "You need the personality to cooperate with so many different people. It takes cooperation, coordination and communication."

Story by Paul Danzer
Photo by Kevin Clark

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