

C onnections



USC Sports Medicine & The Gamecocks: A Winning Combination

Nick Prochak knew that playing football for the Gamecocks and pursuing his education at the University of South Carolina would have its challenges. The tight end just didn't realize that one of those challenges would be a life-threatening injury occurring off the football field.

Prochak remembers the January evening almost a year ago when a collision on his moped left him lying in the road, rapidly losing blood with his left leg broken in multiple places. By the time he was transported by ambulance to Palmetto Health Richland, USC team orthopaedic surgeons Dr. Christopher Mazoué and Dr. Jeffrey Guy were already there. Through a system of communications set up by USC Sports Medicine, the two physicians were immediately alerted

about the accident. An hour after his arrival, Prochak underwent surgery on his leg.

Athletes like Prochak are provided with diagnostic, therapeutic, and preventive health care services through USC Sports Medicine. A partnership with the Department of Family Medicine and Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and Sports Medicine, the comprehensive sports health team includes orthopaedic surgeons, primary care sports medicine physicians, sports medicine fellows, and certified athletic trainers. Based at the USC Sports Medicine Center at Two Medical Park, the program serves individual athletes and teams at all levels of competition, including professional, collegiate, high school, and recreational athletes. Services to the University of

South Carolina expanded in the summer of 2008, when USC Sports Medicine became the official health care provider for all of the school's 21 athletic teams and more than 450 athletes.

Dr. Guy, who serves as Medical Director for USC's intercollegiate athletics, sees the expansion as a culmination of efforts over the past seven years. "One of the things I noticed [when I came in 2001] was the tremendous potential and wealth of health care providers at the university, yet there was not a lot of interaction between them." So began the process of building a collaborative network of support services throughout the university and the School of Medicine. Today the umbrella of health care for the athletes is a collaborative

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effort between the School of Medicine, the Department of Athletics, the College of Education's Athletic Training Program, the Arnold School of Public Health's Department of Exercise Science and Palmetto Health Richland.

USC's athletic trainers serve as the first line of defense for keeping athletes healthy and managing injuries. Physicians at the Sports Medicine Center are only a phone call away. "Expedient access to care is a critical part of sports medicine," said Dr. Guy. "It's not only important to have a really good communication system, but to use the system properly," he said, explaining that in case of injury, athletic trainers know how to reach one of the physicians at all times. Physicians also conduct pre-participation physicals, provide on-site coverage at designated practices and games, staff walk-in clinics, and do some travel with teams.

When a problem occurs, the sports medicine staff encourages athletes to keep their parents in the loop. Prochak's father and mother, Joe and Grace, appreciate not only the care their son has received, but also being actively included in the process. "Whenever I finish talking with Dr. Guy I un-

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Dr. Jeffrey Guy (left) works with tight end Nick Prochak's knee in USC's training room after one of the team's practice sessions.

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Dr. Jeffrey Guy

"The question is how to quickly, but safely, get someone back to their sport."