

New athletic trainer ready to tackle injuries

By **Drey McGrew**,
Print Sports Editor

DGS athletic department has added a new teammate this year, athletic trainer Stephanie Smith has been hired by DGS and her journey here has just begun.

Transferring to DGS has been a rather interesting experience for new athletic trainer Smith. Having come from the collegiate level at Tiffin University, Smith believes her job at DGS is going to be a bit more of a challenge.

"I was a little nervous when first coming to South because I have been working for the college level for the past nine years, and so I've been working with a different group of athletes since I've only been specifically working with a couple different teams rather

than all the teams, so just coming to a new setting is just completely different," Smith said.

Although she is a little nervous, this hasn't stopped Smith from doing what she does best. Smith has a list of goals set for her first year at DGS and she plans on completing all of them.

"This year I want to get to know all of the different athletes as much as I can, since there are so many teams I want to create good relationships with all of them. I also want to keep everyone healthy," Smith said.

This fall, Smith has been really involved with the football players due to how many of them go down to the trainers with injuries. One of those athletes is senior nose guard Shawn Lee. Lee is a starter on the DGS varsity football

team and suffered from a sprained left ankle during a practice.

Lee shares his thoughts on the new trainer. "I like Stephanie, she's cool; I think she knows what she's doing. She helps me everyday with my ankle. She gives me exercises that we can see progress in; She always tells the truth about health, like if I'm not ready to play, she will let me know," Lee said.

Building bonds with athletes is always a big part of an athletic trainer's job, and it seems Smith is on the right path.

Another athlete that has been to the trainers' office recently is junior defensive tackle Christian Collins. Collins is a football player who had injured his hand during the JV football game against DGN two weeks ago.



The taping and icing center of the trainers office for athletes in room E141

Photo by **Drey McGrew**

Collins shares his opinion on the new trainer. "She's cool and really helpful. My hand has been bothering me so whenever I come in, she tells me what I need to be doing in order to recover fully," Collins said.

Smith said she likes DGS so far.

"I like Downers Grove South. ... It's really different from the college level, but everyone here has been very welcoming [to me] and very including," Smith said.

Athletes' injuries are becoming more than physical



Mokery cartoon of an athlete who is prescribed Advil for a serious injury.

Graphic by **Elliot Sheets**

By **Brenna Cohoon**,
Online Sports Editor

A competitive athlete's career can change in a matter of seconds: anything from pivoting the wrong way on a turf field to landing awkwardly after a rebound can cause an agonizing injury, and although the physical effects of these ailments are apparent, the mental consequences of them often remain unseen.

Senior varsity football player Nicholas Mears tore his MCL this summer and experienced another undiagnosed setback from the first play in the first

game of this season. An opponent tackled him from the outside, causing Mears's leg to shift back and inward.

"It has been frustrating to just watch the games on the sideline when I know I could be out there on the field. I have some moments of deep sadness when I think about what I am missing and what I could be enjoying," Mears said.

One of the very unfortunate things about injuries is that they can happen to athletes in any sport. During the winter of her junior



A common solution for injured athletes is utilizing KT tape for injuries.

Photo by **Brenna Cohoon**

year, senior varsity basketball player Erin Ganshow got a concussion in one of her basketball games that lasted about four months.

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"It was hard for me to accept that even once I was physically better, this injury would follow me," Ganshow said.

Two very different inju-

ries can affect athletes in ways that are unexpectedly similar. Once the initial shock of their injuries set in, both Mears and Ganshow were forced to take a step back from competing in order to heal mentally and also physically.

After going through surgery last year to correct her compartment syndrome, a physically-induced condition that constricts her muscles, senior soccer player Allison Eberhard started giving back to her community as a way to heal mentally.

"I volunteer at the

Humane Society, so that was a big way of just like getting my mind off of [my injury] and doing something I enjoy that doesn't involve my legs affecting it," Eberhard said.

Senior varsity soccer player Peter Pierropoulos sprained his ankle while lunging in for a tackle this season. Although dealing with this injury has been a disappointment to Pierropoulos, it has not had as large of an impact on his mental health due to past experiences.

"I've gone through injuries before, so I kind of know how to handle them. It takes a big mental toll, but I've learned how to fight through it," Pierropoulos said.

As challenging as it is to cope with injuries in the moment, the recovery process builds character and teaches valuable lessons. More mental support could be provided to these athletes as they go through these testing times.

Cross country coach Douglas Plunkett spoke on assisting injured athletes through their personal recovery process.

"We try to make it as normal as possible. Everybody's still together at the beginning and end of practice; the only time they really separate is when we're going to do a workout or a run and they have to do cross training or another activity," Plunkett said.