

The neutral corner — Old dogs can learn new tricks —

By Keith Flynn
Kaleidoscope Sports Editor

If someone had wandered into Justice Center last fall and asked for directions to the training room, they would have been greatly disappointed. The "training room" consisted of a tiny whirlpool bath and an ice machine dangerously wired in a janitor's closet. There was no trainer. Coaches taped their own athletes physical weaknesses. The coaches were the first to get to their athletes who were injured on the court or the field. "That," says Linda Murray, UNCA's new athletic trainer, "is ridiculous."

The turnabout came in March when Linda Murray began assembling UNCA's current training room. Murray, a graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill and Mars Hill College sports medicine programs, cringes when she thinks of the condition of athletic training procedures last year. The events that brought Murray to UNCA are very telling in terms of the training program that existed until February of 1982 at UNCA.

Mars Hill College and UNCA were playing a women's basketball game in Justice Gym when Brenda Caldwell, a sophomore hooper for the Lady Lions, crashed to the floor on her back. Linda Murray, student assistant trainer for Mars Hill College, immediately went to the aid of the player.

Caldwell was in pain and experiencing numbness in her legs and feet. Trainer Murray asked UNCA

officials present at the time for a backboard to place the player on to keep her immobile as possible as she was transferred to the training room. "We don't have one," she was told. She then asked for a stretcher. The reply was again negative. Play was stopped for eight full minutes as Murray racked her brain for a solution to the problem.

Finally, at the urging of the game officials and fearing the worst, Murray allowed Caldwell to be lifted and carried manually to the bleachers. An ambulance was then summoned. "It was the scariest moment of my training career," says Murray.

As it turned out, Caldwell had only strained back muscles and is again playing basketball this season. It could have been much worse.

A few days later athletic director Ed Harris called Mars Hill inquiring about the expense and availability of an athletic trainer. Linda Murray was recommended by Director of Sports Medicine, Dr. John Wells. Two weeks later Murray and UNCA came to terms. She came here in March of 1982.

Murray began assembling a suitable training room and looked to establish an adequate budget. "The first year is the hardest," says Murray, "besides building the training room I have to educate the coaches and players alike to make them aware how this room may help them."

The UNCA athletic training

budget is set up to get one large modulation piece of equipment per year. These cost thousands of dollars. The first such piece to grace the new training room will be an ultra-sound machine. This machine radiates heat into a particular body segment and has a greater concentration to speed up the healing process.

The most common athletic injuries occur at the ankle and knee areas. These take time to heal. A twisted ankle, for instance, depending upon the severity must first undergo cryotherapy (application of ice packs) for up to 72 hours before heat can be applied to the injury. Heat applied too soon can have a reverse reaction and cause the swelling to re-occur. Ice has no such effect.

Murray is intent on decorating the training room. She plans to put up curtains and posters as well as informative muscle charts. She feels that the athletes should know what muscles are being treated. With the muscle charts and instruction posters she has simply to point to the injured area on the chart. Thus, the athletes are made aware of their bodies as well as the injury. "The atmosphere is extremely important," says Murray, "it is a belief that comfortable surroundings aid the healing injury."

According to Murray, there are three distinct segments of athletic training. The first is composed primarily of emergency care on the

field when the injury occurs. The second consists of therapy and hopefully a quick recovery to get the athlete playing again. The last third of the procedure is pre-practice taping and educating the athlete about the consequences of his or her injury.

The most common lingering illness that develops regularly in knee injuries is tendonitis. Tendonitis sets up when an injury does not heal properly and inflamed tendons flare up at every twitch of physical activity. It is often a foundation for the development of arthritis in later years.

UNCA is the last state university to hire a full-time athletic trainer and to construct a training room for its athletic programs. The room, large and spacious with all the basic training accommodations, has been thoughtfully constructed with comfort in mind. Although it lacks some modern machinery that will enhance its efficiency, the room on the whole will be fully equipped as well as any in the state. These items are expensive and take time, but the athletic department is taking the steps to purchase them.

The first major step was acknowledging the existing problem and hiring Linda Murray. All athletes can attest to greater security and better performance with confidence in the "doc" — the trainer who knows their importance to their programs and honestly cares about their health first.



Athletes like UNCA's Pat Jolley can now be treated efficiently by new training facilities

Staff photo by David Pickett

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