

Frank Perez, MAT

Can you describe your educational journey as an athletic trainer?

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From the very beginning, the first part is starting here with the Health Science Center in our MAT department. Getting that education was the base. And I think the professors, everything that was there, they really kind of taught us that this is the beginning of our journey. Our journey doesn't stop until we retire. And it's one of my philosophies is the day that I stopped wanting to learn today, I want to stop because I'm doing an injustice to my athletes to everyone that I work with. So kind of going from there, I actually moved to Phoenix, Arizona, it was a great learning hub. When I went to a clinic into Arizona State University there, I got to meet really great people that are now leaders in the industry, just in healthcare alone. So I became and got certified in NASM, CES, PES. I went through the first Graston course, that was fairly new at that point. Active Release Technique course, to learn more manual therapy. You know, just continue to learn different certifications when I went to Cirque du Soleil more of a worldwide kind of view. Got me, introduced to methods that were not probably just used, they were not used here in the US as much but I needed to broaden my horizon because that was my population and my athletes that I use. So did a lot of different Mulligan's, mobilization with movements, McKenzie methods just to add to my repertoire.

How would you describe your personal career path?

1:52

Coming out of school, you know, and I think the opportunities and what we had here to be able to see different clinical sites, from a high school very kind of more of what probably people really come to call the traditional setting, to Texas Tech and working track and field and basketball, here with Coach Knight and seeing the different levels of have that sense of urgency, I think is probably like the best way to kind of describe that and how we have to get things accomplished and work together got me to thinking this, this is what I was going to do. Going into when I was there at Arizona State actually met a colleague, and I think that's something that's very important in this field is to make your network connections. And I had one that I worked with at a USA event and me and her were able to kind of sit there and talk and kind of exchange ideas. And her name is Carrie Gordon. Next year, she's at Cirque du Soleil, and she's calling me every year, "I got a job, you need to come here. This would be great for you." I was very happy and content of what I was doing. I was you know, I was a part of a team that was winning a lot of national champions, championships and individual national champions. And I really kind of felt like that was my calling, my part. Of course sometimes in our lives, and, you know, we have changes and, and I met an awesome young lady that I just knew from day one that she was gonna be my wife and she wanted to change. And so I made the change with her. She asked me if I could get a job in Las Vegas, I sent out two text messages and got a job. And so made that change. And, you know, it's, it's, it was something that was new, it was a leap of faith, it was a deal that said, Okay, I want a new challenge. And I think everything that I got here and my certifications doing things like I valued what I had, what I had and who I had become, and I was ready for that. It was it was a it was a great introduction to a different company and, and how things ran were ran from the traditional setting. And I just I excelled in there. I loved it. It was a place where I was able to continue to grow, went through

Frank Perez, MAT

that setting. And then a big thing again, life changes, married that young lady and then we had kids and it was time to come home. And so, you know, when we came home came back here. That was one of the things that I really wanted to do was to be able to give back to those that had given to me and to continue that legacy. I've you know, I look at my little tree of individuals that I've worked with and my students and I've got people in the NFL, NBA, multiple different colleges.

What would you say to someone who thinks athletic trainers only work in sports settings?

5:07

It's not just a sport setting, you know. And so our athletes, we're all athletes, you know, what we do is a part of our function. Whether even that's as simple as getting up and out of a desk and walking around on stairs, to your full fledged athletes, I've dealt with athletes, and I call them my athletes from a Cirque setting at an age of five to 81 years old. And so they were all athletes. And so we have to kind of treat ourselves that way. I mean, that's one of the things we kind of see and the benefits of and what our college athletes and our professional athletes have to be able to recover and come back from injuries to perform at their optimal level.

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5:54

In the general public right now, I think there's that lack, Athletic trainers have specialized training to bring people back into specific issues or specific functions of their life and I think it can be utilized even more, we've gotten a lot of different certifications, to be able to help that and I think it's going to continue to grow.

How do you feel about the recognition of athletic trainers recently?

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For me, I think it's a great thing. You know, it spotlights that, from what maybe the perception of what a lot of people think what athletic training is, and it's not that we just sit on the sidelines, that we hand out water, that we tape ankles, and there's so much more that goes into this thing, you know, some of the emergence of what we've seen and our trainings and stuff that we've needed from mental health recognition and being able to help athletes recover from the mental standpoint, I think we're very lucky here at Texas Tech too to have four counselors available in the department what we've been able to put in internally. But it helps that, you know, we also have, you know, full time dieticians, but if we didn't have that, that falls on to the athletic trainer, you know, the athletic trainer, and to the rest of the sport staff, which is usually like kind of strength and conditioning in this type in this type of settings, we're able to work together collectively, to be able to get all this stuff done.

Frank Perez, MAT

How important is it to focus on the prevention aspect of athletic training?

7:21

You know, prevention is everything. And so the more work we can do on the prevention side, the better we're going to have our athletes being available, you know, best athletes around is, those that are there, you know, and that can perform and that they're at their optimal level. And that's where our part and where our communication that happens with strength and conditioning with our coaching staff, to make sure that we can keep those players available. We need robust athletes that are adaptable. And so that's part of our deal. We have to make sure to try to help manage some of that stuff.

What's your favorite part of your job?

7:58

I think the favorite my favorite part of my job is just working with the people that I work with, both from the Sports Medicine Department from mental health, nutrition, strength and conditioning, and our coaches. We have to be all together and provide that collaborative care to put out a great product and our product is our student athletes. And so being a part of that to be able to put that in and see this see all the overall success is probably my favorite part of my job.