

Sports

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Many local schools don't have athletic trainers

SPECIAL REPORT:
Westchester, Putnam
lagging behind Rockland

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During Harrison High's final preseason scrimmage last year, Randy Turso positioned himself to block an opponent and his knee was in an awkward position. The other team's defensive end fell into the side of Turso's knee, tearing his right medial collateral ligament and meniscus.

The injury was supposed to sideline Turso for four months and require surgery. However, the senior made it back onto the field within 10 weeks - in time to play in the Section 1 Class B title game - without any surgery.

The offensive lineman at-

tributed his rapid recovery to the conditioning program of football coach Art Troilo Jr. and the school's athletic trainer, Dave Sheridan.

"They have a very good lifting program. All year-round it goes. It never stops," Turso said. "We've always had good trainers at Harrison. He (Sheridan) was really helpful in my rehab and everything. They do a great job. Most schools don't have what we have."

Unlike many schools in the area, Harrison has an athletic trainer on staff who is at just about every practice of every team, both varsity and junior varsity.

Of Section 1 schools in Rockland County, 10 of 12 have athletic trainers on staff. The numbers drop dramatically in Westchester, where 22 of the 59 schools surveyed have trainers

on staff (not including three part-timers), and Putnam, where only one of the four schools employs an athletic trainer.

"That's been a major help in keeping kids healthy and getting them back healthy from injuries," Troilo said. "Before, the onus was on the coach."

In many cases, the onus is still on the football coach. And the job is no longer from August to November.

"Conditioning is an all-year-round process," said Dr. Elliott Pellman, the team physician for the Jets and Islanders. "The athletes who avoid serious injuries are those who work out all the time and take that quite seriously."

"Many injuries are preventable, and my recommendation always is, maybe not quite as intense during the sea-

son, that things like stretching and strengthening are all-year-round."

Like many high school coaches, Roosevelt's Tony DeMatteo is well-versed in conditioning and various forms of injury prevention. He has to be, since the Yonkers schools do not employ athletic trainers.

"It's almost a necessity now," he said. "While you're coaching, it's hard to do both. If you have somebody who's there totally to take care of injuries, the rehabilitation process would probably be much better. You can't really work with that kid because you're out on the field coaching."

Emily Cicale, in her fourth year as athletic trainer at Keio Academy in Purchase, agreed.

"Coaches are there for coaching, and if I tried to coach a game, I could probably do a

half-decent job," she said, laughing. "If I'm not qualified (to take care of a particular injury or situation), I don't stray there."

Cicale said she taped at least 1,000 ankles before she even passed a taping exam while studying athletic training at Kean College in New Jersey.

"Coaches have first aid and CPR, but they don't have the base of knowledge that would be needed to correctly assess injuries," said Patti Jarnot, Mahopac's athletic trainer. "So they're kind of put between a rock and a hard place. If they don't have somebody there, they have to decide if it's something for which they need to call an ambulance or not, or if this is something (the athletes) can play with or not."

Please see TRAINERS, 7C