

Unique emergency puts spotlight on Irvington athletic trainer

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Mackenzie Livermore has tended to plenty of injuries during his first year as the athletic trainer at Irvington High School.

Some of them have been minor, like slight sprains. Others have been unfortunately serious, such as ACL and shoulder injuries.

Then there was his afternoon on March 29, which he'll likely remember throughout his career, especially since everything that transpired worked out well.

It was all also a great reminder of the work that athletic trainers perform every day, especially with National Athletic Training Month coming to a close.

The spring season is a busy one at Irvington. On any given afternoon, the boys volleyball team could be using the gym, while the girls and boys outdoor track, girls lacrosse or flag football teams could be using the field behind the school. Baseball might be at Chancellor Field, its home diamond in another part of town. Meanwhile, the softball and boys tennis teams could be in action at Irvington Park. He has to tend to it all, as well as the Middle School programs.

On that day, Livermore was stationed at Irvington Park, where he was watching the softball team play host to Golda Och in a scrimmage. On the other side of the park, the tennis team was playing Snyder in a scrimmage.

Livermore soon received a call from Dr. John Taylor, the Irvington athletic director, that he was needed over at the tennis courts for an unusual reason, yet one that could certainly be dangerous: One of the athletes had been stung by a bee.

"I was up at softball, watching the game and got a call from Dr. Taylor that someone got stung by a bee. I went down, the kid got stung in his ear, and I took care of him and he was fine."



Irvington trainer Mackenzie Livermore

Having handled that situation, Livermore returned back to the softball game. But soon after, he received a much more urgent call from the tennis courts. One of the players from Snyder had collapsed, and he appeared to be in bad shape.

"Maybe a half hour to 45 minutes later, I got a call that a kid was having a seizure down at the tennis courts, so I picked up my bag and booked it down there," he said.

Livermore quickly arrived at the courts, where he saw both coaches tending to the player, who was still down.

"My coach called me up and said that he needed Mack down there now," Taylor said. "He told me a kid just passed out and was having a seizure. We got down there and he was shaking pretty violently. Mack sprang into action real quick, and student eventually came to. I was so impressed how Mack was so calm under pressure."

Livermore also learned the likely cause of the collapse, which is actually an important reminder for athletic trainers everywhere: The Snyder player is fasting for Ramadan, the month in the Islamic calendar where participants abstain from eating food or drinking fluids from dawn to sunset.

The 30-day period began on March 23. As an observant Muslim, the Snyder player was felled due to extreme dehydration. He was stabilized at the scene, and after the Irvington EMS arrived, was taken to a local hospital where he received further treatment.

“Our coach (Salim Laib) was working with the kid and making sure he was okay, and did a great job,” Livermore said. “I helped move him and made sure he was getting water. He was coming back to himself, but was having trouble remembering where he was, because he was so out of whack. But we got him help, got 911 there, let them know what was going on and got him to safety and he’s doing better now.”

Livermore, a graduate of Delaware Valley High School, was stationed at the right place at the right time. But it was more than just that.

“I was glad that I was there so that I could make sure he was okay,” he said. “Our coach did a great job handling the situation as well. You always have to be prepared. I have to make sure I have everything I need to make sure that I can help.”

Even the initial bee sting call could have been dangerous if an allergy was involved.

“The coach was telling me how the player was putting on his headphones, and somehow he caught a bee on the inside of his headphone, it closed on his ear and stung the inside of it. You think ‘How in the world does this stuff happen’? But it does. Luckily he wasn’t allergic. He was fine, just a little swollen and itchy.”

The second incident was obviously dangerous as well, and could have ended much worse.

“He was fasting for Ramadan, which makes it hard to play a sport while you’re going through that,” Livermore said. “You’ve got nothing in your body, and

no nutrients to produce while you’re trying to play a tennis match. It just kind of gave up on him and kind of produced a seizure because he didn’t have anything to work with.”

“He was observing Ramadan,” Taylor said. “I bless anyone who has that kind of dedication and self-discipline.”

“Two things you wouldn’t expect, and both of them were in tennis,” Livermore said. “Both of them will be okay, so it was a good day.”

Livermore’s daily routine tending to many teams at multiple venues may seem hectic, but it’s also something he enjoys.

“There’s always something going on here,” he said. “There are so many athletes that something pops up more than you think it will. It’s crazy, but I enjoy it. I like the busyness of it. All the stuff they teach you in school, it will eventually be important.”

Tending to the collapsed athlete was also a team effort, with the coaches helping to chip in until the EMS crew arrived.

“Mack and my tennis coach - you would have thought it was one of his own players the way he was caring about him,” Taylor said. “I have two little girls of my own, and God forbid something like that happened to them, but I would be thrilled and be happy if my trainer and coach at my school took care of their kids like that. I was really impressed with our staff, and feel like the kids at Irvington and anyone who comes here are in really good hands. Something like what happened puts some shine to that.”