

# First Line of Defense

Garrett, a Marshall High School football player and wrestler, successfully rehabilitated his shoulder so he could get back to playing sports.



First he heard the pop, and then he felt the pain. Sixteen-year-old Garrett had dislocated his left shoulder during a tackling drill for his football team, the Marshall High School Statesmen. As an avid athlete who also wrestles for Marshall, Garrett didn't want to sit on the sidelines. Thanks to a unique collaboration between local certified athletic trainers (ATCs) and Commonwealth Orthopaedics, he didn't have to.

"ATCs are critical partners, and the first line of defense, in prevention and sideline management of sports injuries in student athletes," says Kevin Sumida, MD, who teamed up with Marshall ATC John Reynolds to assess and treat Garrett's injury. "They evaluate the problem and initiate care. They work closely with us to determine the best course of treatment. Oftentimes, they supervise rehabilitation as well."

Reynolds sent Garrett and his parents to see Dr. Sumida at Commonwealth. After weighing treatment options, they decided on rehabilitation rather than surgery. From that moment on, everyone worked together to help Garrett make a successful return to football, and then wrestling.

"We focused on exercises to build strength in his shoulder and restore stability," explains Reynolds, who supervised the majority of Garrett's rehabilitation in Marshall's athletic training room. "As Garrett's return to football drew closer, Dr. Sumida and I communicated extensively to choose an appropriate brace and outline play progression for his coaches. We continued to work with him throughout the fall and winter to keep his shoulder as strong as possible."

This close collaboration ensured a safe return to football and wrestling for Garrett, who relied on his ATC's expertise and support. "Mr. Reynolds was always there when I needed him. He made sure I knew the routine and could practice on my own. He gave Dr. Sumida up-to-date information about me so when I got to his office he'd already know what was going on," he says.

Garrett's mother Holly says the partnership worked like a "synchronized machine" in coordinating her son's recovery. She feels fortunate to have the resources of a knowledgeable ATC working in concert with a skilled team of physicians in the community. "My husband and I were reassured that our son was getting the proper diagnosis and treatment. We didn't have to worry about whether or not he was following the rehabilitation plan because we knew he was being watched carefully. In our busy

household, managing Garrett's care was almost effortless," she says.

Rebecca, 15, of Alexandria, relies on the expertise of her high school ATC to keep her performing at optimal capacity following an injury last fall. Rebecca suffered a stress fracture in the femoral shaft of her left leg during a game with her travel team, when an opponent cleated her in the thigh. She consulted Commonwealth surgeon Daniel Weingold, MD, who worked closely with her ATC to coordinate a safe and swift recovery.

"Once we had diagnosed and treated her stress fracture, I communicated with her ATC about the importance of strict activity limits until her injury was completely healed, followed by a properly directed therapeutic exercise program to build back her muscle strength," Dr. Weingold says. "Fortunately, we caught her stress fracture before it progressed to a complete fracture, which would have been devastating for her and required painful surgery and a prolonged recovery."

Rebecca spent a month on crutches, and then began walking and jogging, gradually increasing her intensity as the weeks progressed. "Dr. Weingold explained things really well and helped me understand what I should and shouldn't be doing," she says. "I returned to the soccer field in the spring and now I feel fine."

The most common injuries among student athletes range from simple ankle sprains that may keep them out of a game or two, to torn ligaments and stress fractures such as Rebecca's, which require an entire season to heal. Stress fractures often occur in the fall and spring, due to sudden increases in training intensity or overuse injuries. Problems also exist if a student enters a new sport without adequate knowledge of what to expect.

"Education and prevention are major areas of focus for ATCs," says Reynolds. "To keep our students healthy and ready to play, many students take the personal fitness classes at Marshall High School. They also participate in off-season and pre-season conditioning programs, and our educational seminars on nutrition, concussion recognition and preventing communicable diseases such as the flu."

Education is a vital part of the Commonwealth partnership as well. Every year, the practice sponsors a free ATC Workshop where local athletic trainers can interact with Commonwealth physicians and other healthcare providers to learn the latest evaluation and management techniques, improve skills and strengthen their working relationship. This popular event attracts more than 60 ATCs and team physicians from throughout the Washington metropolitan region.

"This is a great way to give back to the community and the ATCs appreciate the information," says Bruce Zimmer, MD, one of the many Commonwealth surgeons who share their expertise as physicians for local sports teams (see sidebar on page 6). "As team physicians, we develop good relationships with the ATCs, so when students are hurt they can quickly consult with us about care or follow-up. And we get to know the kids and their families on a personal level, which makes the experience even more fulfilling."

Now 17 and a Marshall High School senior, Garrett is excited to return to the football field as a middle linebacker for the Statesmen this fall. He's also reassured that both John Reynolds and Dr. Sumida will be on the sidelines, watching out for him and his teammates. "If someone gets hurt, they'll be right there," he says. "They'll be close to our team."



**Kevin D. Sumida, MD**, graduated with a BA from DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana. Dr. Sumida earned a medical degree from the

University of Kentucky College of Medicine in Lexington. He completed his orthopaedic surgery training in Lexington before completing a fellowship in Sports Medicine at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In addition to his orthopaedic practice, he is also a clinical assistant professor at Georgetown University.



**Daniel E. Weingold, MD**, earned an undergraduate degree at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. He completed his

medical degree at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and finished his surgical internship and orthopaedic residency training at George Washington University Medical Center in Washington, DC.



**Bruce S. Zimmer, MD**, graduated magna cum laude with a BS from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia,

and then earned his medical degree from the Medical College of Virginia. He stayed on at the Medical College of Virginia to complete both his surgical internship and orthopaedic residency.

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