

# Day in the Life: Flower Mound High School

**W**hat's it like to be a secondary school athletic trainer in the state that inspired *Friday Night Lights*? We spent the day with Flower Mound High School athletic trainers Jeff Brown, MS, ATC, LAT, Cody Jenschke, ATC, LAT, and Paul Dunham, MS, ATC, LAT, to get a peek inside the average football Friday in Texas.

Flower Mound High School is located in Flower Mound, Texas, which is a northern suburb of the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. Nearly 3,200 students pass through its doors each day, and the athletic trainers care for approximately 1,000 athletes competing in 11 sports. The athletic trainers have worked hard over the years to develop a successful sports medicine program for students, currently tutoring 34 high school student aides.

As you can imagine, the athletic trainers were busy when we visited them on a recent football and volleyball game day on Sept. 9.

Text & Images **Jordan Grantham**

*To watch a short documentary of the day we spent with the athletic trainers at Flower Mound High School, visit NATA's Vimeo page at <http://vimeo.com/30503605>.*

**7:00 a.m.** The athletic training room is open, and the injured athletes are trickling in. Jenschke sits at his desk, looking over a football player's recent concussion testing results. "This kid didn't improve at all," Jenschke sighs.

**7:23 a.m.** The athletic training room is occupied with 15 athletes receiving treatments before school. Some are being iced, others are riding stationary bikes and some are having wounds tended before school begins. Brown stands by a computer in the middle of the room, inputting injury updates. Flower Mound uses Rank One Sport software to keep track of rehabilitation schedules and to email coaches about their injured players. "This is all about efficiency," Brown explains. "We have 11 different sports and more than 30 teams, so we don't have time to have detailed conversations with each coach."

The room is also starting to fill with students in the sports medicine program wearing Hawaiian shirts and grass skirts in support of the Hawaiian-themed pep rally scheduled for later that afternoon.

**8:00 a.m.** A baseball player with a gruesome gash in his leg comes in for new bandages, quickly becoming the star of the athletic training room. He explains how he crashed into the right fielder while tracking a fly ball and was sliced



open with the other player's metal cleats. Jenschke cleans and dresses the player's 13 stitches while the student aides watch with interest.

**8:15 a.m.** The bell rings for students to report to first period, so most of the injured athletes clear out of the room. The student aides have sports medicine as their first class of the day, so they begin filling ice chests for the football game that evening. "We have to start this early so the ice machine can reload itself all day," Jenschke says.

While some students are scooping ice into the coolers, others are restocking the large trunks that hold extra tape, bandages and other supplies down on the football sidelines. The supplies been depleted from the junior varsity football games the night before. "Ordinarily we would be covering football practice during first

period," Brown says, "but they don't practice on game days."

Over near the door, Jenschke shows a football player how to put on his necktie. "That's one of the things that is not in the job description!" he jokes.

**8:45 a.m.** Brown and the senior athletic training students troop over to the cafeteria, each carrying plastic containers with the materials needed for breakfast tacos. The Senior AT Breakfast is a Friday morning tradition at Flower Mound, and the students take turns bringing breakfast. Brown goes over the duties for the evening's football game and then turns his discussion to the current reading material, *Ten Things I Wish I'd Known* by Maria Shriver. Soon, the tacos are gone.





**9:45 a.m.** Jenschke teaches Sports Medicine I during second period, which is the course freshmen students must take to apply for the sports medicine program. It's the Friday before Sept. 11, but most of these students are too young to remember much from that day. Jenschke tells the class where he was on Sept. 11, 2001, and then he passes out an exam. The class is hugely popular, with 46 students crammed into a room in the athletics building, but you can hear a pin drop once the tests are handed out.

To be a high school student aide at Flower Mound High, they must first complete Sports Medicine I during the fall semester of freshman year. Then they must complete an application to move on to Sports Medicine II during the spring semester, which is a more hands-on course. The application is extensive, including a written essay and letters of recommendation. Brown and Jenschke normally get 30 applicants and have to narrow it down to 12 freshmen that will continue in the program. Sophomore athletic training students work freshman football or volleyball plus a second sport, and juniors work junior varsity football and a second sport of their choosing. Seniors work varsity football and can choose to work a second sport in the spring if they choose.



**10:30 a.m.** Brown sits at his desk, working on paperwork and calling parents to update them on their child's injuries. Country music plays throughout the athletic training room as a few athletes filter in and out.

Brown's athletic training path actually started in his own high school athletic training room, where he was an injured athlete receiving treatment. He enjoyed it so much that he pursued two athletic training degrees from Texas A&M-Commerce. After college he began work in the clinical setting as an outreach athletic trainer, but he decided he wanted to be a full-time high school athletic trainer so he could develop strong relationships with the students. He started off as an assistant athletic trainer at Flower Mound before being promoted to head AT.

"My favorite part of this job is interacting with the athletic training students," Brown says. "It's not just about the student athletes – I try really hard to make it about the athletic training aides, too."

Flower Mound has many awards in place to recognize the student aides, with plaques for Student Athletic Trainer of the Year, Most Improved, Newcomer and Top Taper decorating the walls of the athletic training facility. The Golden Cast is awarded each year to an athlete who has overcome a significant injury, and Orthopedic Associates, the local sports medicine practice, awards \$500 scholarships to the student aides who earn University Interscholastic League All-State Academic Awards.

**10:45 a.m.** Dunham arrives for the day and begins prepping for the football game that evening, filling coolers and restocking supplies. Unlike Brown and Jenschke, Dunham is not employed by the Lewisville Independent School District. He works for a local orthopedic practice, Physical Therapy of Flower Mound, and

spends most of each day at Flower Mound.

**11:00 a.m.** Brown closes the doors to his office while he meets with the parents of a player who recently suffered a concussion. They discuss prognosis and treatment, and Brown pledges to keep them informed through the recovery process.

**11:45 a.m.** It's lunchtime at the school, and Jenschke is summoned to an Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) meeting for one of his Sports Medicine I students. The athletic training room fills with student aides, using the space to eat lunch and relax before the second half of the school day.



**12:30 p.m.** The athletic trainers finally have a spare moment for lunch, and it's Dunham's turn to pick up the tab. The men chow down on Jersey Mike's and relish this quiet part of the day. "It may look like we're eating a lot," Dunham says, "But we never know when we'll get to eat again after lunch on game days, so we load up!"

**1:30 p.m.** The bell rings for the final class period of the day, which means freshman football is practicing. Jenschke rounds up the student aides to begin carrying the equipment down to the sideline in preparation for the football game. They arrange the fans, trunks and portable athletic training tables just so while the football players run sprints in the background. "This is where I get really particular," Jenschke admits. "I like the sideline to be set up a specific way because it is a reflection of me."





After the sideline is ready, the group heads over to the football field house to set up a temporary athletic training room for pregame taping and halftime treatments. The team's film room and kitchen is quickly converted into an AT facility with three taping tables and two trunks of medical supplies.

**3:00 p.m.** The Hawaiian pep rally begins in the gym, and the athletic training aides are finished with the game preparation in time to attend. While the students are at the pep rally, Brown, Jenschke and Dunham continue with final prep work for the games that evening.

Flower Mound volleyball players start trickling in, ready to be taped in preparation for their home game. When football and volleyball are both hosting home games on the same night, Brown works volleyball while Jenschke and Dunham take care of football.

**3:30 p.m.** Jenschke and Brown walk over to the cafeteria, where the football team is eating a pregame spaghetti dinner. Each player is handed a small pack of Medi-Lyte to take before the game to prevent cramping, and the players who have a history of muscle cramps are given small bottles of Pickle Juice. "We only had one player cramp the first game, and the temperatures were over 100 degrees that night," Brown remembered. "That was a pretty good day for us."

**5:00 p.m.** Jenschke and Dunham work in the makeshift AT room in the football building, tending a long line of football players waiting to be taped or bandaged. The student aides stand nearby, helping bandage small wounds. The crowded room is eerily quiet, and the quarterback explains to me that the team "doesn't like to talk much" before the games.

**5:30 p.m.** Brown is busy in the main athletic training facility, taping the ankles of Flower Mound volleyball players. A youth football player, who happens to be the brother of a former athletic training student aide, finds his way into

the athletic training room with his dad to ask for advice about playing with his arm in a cast. Brown checks his arms and sends him on his way with an armful of foam padding to wrap the cast during games.

**6:00 p.m.** The JV volleyball games are starting in the large gym. The student aides sit on the end of the bench, ready to help with minor injuries and to distribute water while Brown monitors the game from the doorway.

Jenschke and Dunham are on the football field, tending to last-minute injuries and watching over the football players as they stretch before the game. The student aides are each have a sheet of paper that details their assignments, and they each know what tasks they are responsible for during the game.

**7:30 p.m.** Train whistles blaring and the marching band at full volume, the teams sprint from the tunnels with all the fanfare you would expect in Texas High School football. After the kickoff, a steady slew of injuries keep the athletic trainers occupied. Dunham plugs a bloody nose while Jenschke and the team physician evaluate a player who has suffered a hip injury. Jenschke tends a hand injury, and Dunham evaluates an ankle. The student aides hand out cold towels and water bottles to the players as they come off the field.

**8:30 p.m.** One of the athletic training student aides is honored on the field for her academic performance as the crowd cheers.

**9:30 p.m.** The athletic training staff spends halftime consulting with the team physicians in the field house. Brown and Gomez go over a concussion test while Dunham builds a custom heel pad for one of the player's shoes. Gomez examines the fractured ankle that happened in last week's game, and Brown retapes and braces the ankle. Before they know it, it's time to return to the field.

The game continues, and the athletic trainers continue to tend minor injuries.

**11:30 p.m.** The game has just wrapped up, but the athletic trainers aren't done yet. The student aides pack up the equipment and take it back to the athletic training facility while Brown and Jenschke tend to injured players.

One of the wide receivers has a fingernail hanging by a thread after smashing it between two helmets, so the team physician, Dr. John Gomez, is set up in the field house to give him stitches. Brown rubs an ice pack on the player's neck while Gomez applies the stitches. The player looks relieved when Gomez finishes and is soon joking with his mom about whether he'll be able to take the ACT test the next day.

**1:00 a.m.** The athletic training equipment is back in the facility, and the loose ends from the game have been tied up. Brown, Jenschke and Dunham can finally lock up the athletic training facility and call it a day.

They are exhausted, but they'll be back at school at 9 a.m. the next day for treatments.

No rest for the ~~weary~~ athletic trainers!

