



C. David Burton

MA, ATC, ATHLETIC TRAINER FOR CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

AGE: I AM ABOUT TO CELEBRATE THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF MY 38TH BIRTHDAY

ALMA MATER(S): UNDERGRADUATE - FORT HAYS KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY;
GRADUATE - UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

ACTIVITIES: FATHER OF THREE WONDERFUL SONS, TWO FABULOUS DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW AND ONE FANTASTIC GRANDSON

What inspired you to become an athletic trainer?

My own limited athletic ability ... and my desire to combine my passion for athletics with my interest in physical medicine. Also, I have to give most of the credit (or blame) to my mentor, Steve Antonopoulos, MA, ATC.

What's unique about working with the international Cirque du Soleil shows as opposed to the stationary shows in Las Vegas?

Although the injuries we manage and the services we provide are similar, working on a touring show presents a special set of circumstances and challenges for an athletic trainer. Not only are you working with the crew and artists all week, you are also living with them – which means that you are "on-call" or available 24/7. Moving to a different city each week means learning to live out of a suitcase as a lifestyle, not as a choice. And finding medical referral resources that are available and have an understanding of the demands of your performers presents its own set of challenges. The majority of health care providers are not insurance-centric; therefore "Cash is King" is the rule of thumb for most health care referral service centers when managing care internationally. Outside of North America, private health care is preferable when accessible.

What does a typical week look like for you?

Travel to a new city late Sunday/early Monday morning and check into a new hotel – Mondays are usually a "free day" to rest or explore your new location, unless you have made a referral appointment for an artist and need to attend with them. Tuesdays are "load-in" day: Unload the trucks and set up the venue in preparation for the week's activities. Our show, Alegria, travels with 24 semi-trailers of staging, technical equipment, lighting, sound equipment, office equipment and a full physio-therapy setup. Wednesdays start early in the morning, with act trainings all day prior to the first show that evening; Thursdays look a lot like Wednesdays



with trainings and an evening show. Fridays and Saturdays mean fewer trainings, but two shows are usually performed on those evenings. Sundays usually include two shows and "load-out," which means loading everything back into the trunks and getting it ready for the next location.

What's the craziest thing that's happened while working abroad with Cirque?

Attempting to discuss the medical necessity of surgical intervention on one of our artists with a French orthopedist and his Russian assistant, neither one of whom spoke English, prior to the arrival of our interpreter. The conversation started out very slowly and was quite animated (lots of pictures being drawn and poses being performed) but it was amazing how similar the "language of medicine" can be shared. It was amusing and educational.

What do you enjoy most about being an AT in this setting?

The same thing that I have enjoyed about being an athletic trainer in every setting I have had the privilege of working in: I have the opportunity every day to positively impact someone's life. It sounds a bit cliché, but there are not too many professions that allow you that opportunity.

What is the highlight of your career thus far?

When I get to see young professionals who I was able to work with succeed in the profession.



If you couldn't be an athletic trainer, what would you do instead?

I would have been a teacher... Wait a minute, that's what I do anyway.

What advice would you give to AT students interested in working in the performing arts setting?

Get as much exposure as you possibly can to as many different settings as you can. Explore and experience opportunities as they are presented to you. Take advantage of learning as much as you can from as many different professionals as you can. And never, ever be afraid to take a different direction.