

Behind the scenes, always present

Athletic trainer Kristen Fosness has quiet impact on M.A.'s athletes

By Railyn Ross

TALON STAFF WRITER

A week in Seattle, it's five in the morning, awakened by a banging door, she thinks to herself "what the heck is going on."

As she opens the door, a young gymnast tells her she feels sick. Fosness rushes her to the hospital and waits with her as she is prescribed medication and drives her to the pharmacy. Around six in the morning, she heads back to the hotel with the gymnast.

At ten in the morning, she hears another knocking at the door. Another gymnast tells her she feels sick, and Fosness hops back in the car to take her to the emergency room and repeats the process.

By the time she gets back, she has yet to eat breakfast, take a shower, or do anything for herself before the day begins. Licensed Athletic Trainer (LAT) Kristen Fosness is rarely in the spotlight, but she is a crucial part of every athlete's performance. She often sacrifices her own needs for the well-being of others.

After earning a master's in athletic training from North Dakota State University, and an LAT at Hamline University, Fosness was brought to Minnehaha Academy where she works with all student athletes in the program including the co-op teams.

She had learned about an opening at Minnehaha from her coworker through TCO, and Blake High School LAT, Aubrey Dudley, and applied. She

had formed a relationship with Dudley and she was excited to be working with her during the co-op seasons that Blake and Minnehaha had together.

"I get to see a wide variety of sports, which is fun," said Fosness. "[Working in a high school] it's not the same thing every day for months on end, which can get a little dull."

After attaining the athletic trainer position at MA, she quickly stepped into a role of many challenges.

Fosness spends most of her workday interacting with athletes, parents, and coaches. Even though her job is important, she often is met with a lack of respect from others.

She has had to deal with plenty of disrespectful people over the years, not because she's not doing her job, but because people are ignorant of the high intensity of her job.

"A lot of people think I'm just going to be everywhere, and they don't understand that I might have something else going on," said Fosness.

There have been a few times when Minnehaha hosts multiple games on the same day, and it is her job to be present at as many games as possible. Sometimes emergencies require her to drive down from the north to the south campus and tend to an athlete or vice versa. She said that plenty of parents have gotten mad at her, to the point of screaming in her face, because she wasn't on the scene in a split second.

"I always try to be present



PHOTO BY RAILYN ROSS

Minnehaha trainer Kristen Fosness talks with sprints and hurdles coach Sam Lundquist on May 2 during a track meet at South Campus. Coaches often check in with Fosness about injured athletes before and after events.

when I can, but I get pulled around quite a bit," she said.

When she comes in contact with angry parents, she knows that there is nothing she can say to calm the situation because all parents want is the best for their kid. Fosness finds that ignoring them and giving her full attention to the injured athlete works best.

"I try to block them out, and [do] what's best for the athlete. Then after, explaining to [parents] why things were done the way they were done. Most of the time, they understand," she said.

Not only do people overlook her, but so does social media.

"A lot of people, kids, coaches, parents, will come in and they say, I Googled it, or I saw on TikTok. But being the expert, [I] can narrow it down even more to what's going on," said Fosness.

Even though Fosness does enjoy what she does, her expertise is constantly being discred-

ited by the outside world.

"There are a lot of people who just don't understand. It's just educating them on what the new research is and what's been proven to be effective," said Fosness.

Her work life is very demanding and often leaves her with little to no time for family, romantic relationships, and even herself. Most nights, she gets home around 7 pm and is in bed by 11 or 12 on a good day.

In the fall, her free time is especially limited because of the tight schedules. Having soccer at the upper campus, and football at the lower campus makes things a lot trickier for Fosness.

"Football is a beast in itself. Between their practices at South Campus, we have to go to every game, whether it's home or away," said Fosness.

On game days, Fosness is typically the first one to arrive and the last to leave because

she has to clean up everything after the game before she can go. This typically means that she has a late dinner and even later bedtime.

"Especially on a Friday, I'm probably not in bed until two," said Fosness.

Despite the constant demands and lack of recognition, Fosness continues to show up for every athlete who needs her.

Fosness is the backbone of MA's athletic performance, and it is often unrecognized. Not every school has an athletic trainer, making her much more significant to our community. Fosness's dedication to this school has impacted so many student-athletes in the past years.

Senior Jonah Schimelpfenig has had multiple injuries and sought out Fosness's help for treatment while growing closer to her over time.

"She's very personable, she's easy to talk to about what you're going through. She gives you good advice on your injury, but also life as well," said Schimelpfenig.

In the past few months, sophomore, Thellma Minde had broken her fifth metatarsal bone in her right foot. For weeks, with the help of Fosness, she spent time recovering and bounced back in time for her winter basketball season and her spring track and field season.

"She's just a great caretaker. She walked me through all the instructions of recovery and just getting back to my best self," said Minde. "Honestly, she was just doing God's work."

Girls flag football debuts as club sport

By Kimora Givens

TALON STAFF WRITER

Minnehaha Academy is kicking off an exciting new chapter this spring with the introduction of girls flag football, a sport designed to build friendship, teamwork, and sportsmanship.

Despite some initial hesitation about launching a new program on short notice, the team quickly gained momentum, drawing an enthusiastic roster of 26 players. The program reflects a broader effort to expand athletic opportunities for students while building a strong team culture from the ground up.

"I joined flag football because I enjoy watching football and it's been getting popular over the years and I thought it would be fun," said sophomore Thellma Minde.

Practices for the girls flag football team include a lot of scrimmaging which helps players in the game in a more



PHOTO BY GABI BELTON

Sophomore Danasia Anderson laughs during a flag football practice May 5 at Minnehaha's South Campus field. The team's schedule this spring included eight games on four Sunday afternoons, with District 11 playoffs schedule to begin Sunday, May 24.

realistic setting during the scrimmages. Players practice running plays, improving communication and reacting quickly to different situations on the field. It gives the teams a chance to apply what they've learned in drills and build bet-

ter teamwork. Even though their mistakes happen, scrimmaging helps players gain experience, build confidence and understand how the game flows in real time.

Without a doubt adding flag football encourages girls to get

Flag football facts

- Girls flag football almost doubled since last year with 104 high schools participating
- The NFL is involved with funding teams and helping the leagues development
- Some universities are offering girls flag football scholarships

out of their comfort zone and open their minds to new things. On the other hand flag football can definitely be challenging, especially for the players who are new to the sport. Learning the rules, plays and positions can take time and it can be difficult to adjust during the game.

"I didn't really know what to expect, but everyone was really welcoming," said first-year Nylah Hankins.

Her comment highlights the positive team culture that has helped players adjust quickly to the new program. That sense of support has also translated onto the field. As the players continue learning how to work together. Minnehaha is already

showing steady improvement.

Communication on the field is important as players have quickly learned how to work together and trust one another even with these challenges. The team continues to improve with each practice and gain building confidence and skills along the way Minnehaha had their first game Sunday April 26 at DeLaSalle High School, marking an exciting milestone for the new team as they begin their first season.

As the season continues players are excited to keep improving and growing together. The team hopes to build a strong foundation and inspire more girls to join flag football in the future.