

diate emergency and follow-up care. They develop athletic injury prevention and treatment programs using their knowledge of biomechanics, anatomy and pathology.

For athletes, ATs also provide a vital communication link between the injured athlete, the physician, the coach, and sometimes the athlete's family, to determine when it's right to return to practice and competition.

Today, there are more than 30,000 athletic trainers employed in the United States. Each year, the profession grows by about 10 percent, which is about average for most professions.

The certified athletic trainer is a highly educated and skilled health sciences professional specializing in athletic health care. In cooperation with physicians and other allied health personnel, the athletic trainer functions as an integral member of the athletic health-care team in secondary schools, colleges and universities, sports medicine clinics, professional sports programs and other health-care settings.

Baugh laughs when asked about an "off season." These days, there is not much of an off-season for even the players, much less the athletic trainers.

"When we got back from the Super Bowl, we had about a half-week to enjoy it because we immediately changed gears to prepare to host the NFL scouting combines Feb. 21-27," he said. "After that, we began scheduling our off-season surgeries and rehabilitations. Then, the next couple of weeks were spent calling schools, reviewing combine notes and participating in draft meetings and discussions."

In mid-April, the trainers are involved in the team's off-season workout/conditioning program where they provide on-field medical coverage while the players participate in voluntary workouts. These workouts lead up to the mini-camps and summer-school workouts, which end just prior to summer camp, and then the regular season begins.

"Now don't get me wrong. We will have some weekends off, and the staff rotates some vacation time, but as a staff, we are always available," said Baugh. "Once the season starts, there are NO off days; however, some days are lighter than others."

### So, what is it like?

So what is working as an athletic trainer for an NFL team like? Here's how Baugh describes his typical work week during the season.

"Sunday, for the most part, is game day, which is the reward. Monday is usually a treatment/rehab and light workout day for the guys just to get them moving around after the game. Monday evening, the medical staff meets with coaches to discuss injuries from the game and who may or may not be available for the upcoming week. Tuesday is usually the players' day off, except for those requiring treatment,

who are seen by trainers during the day.

"Wednesday and Thursday are heavy practice days. We do morning rehab and treatment, which begin at 7:00 a.m., so we usually arrive between 6:00 and 6:15 to prep everything. Practice runs from 2:00 to 4:20 p.m., and then the injured players report to the training room to see the orthopedic doctors and receive treatment.

"Friday is a lighter practice day, which begins at the same time, but practice runs from 11:00 to 1:00. The players usually clear out around 2:30, and we're out by 4:00. Saturday is the same start time, but we just have a walk-through at 10:15. If we have a home game, I usually skip the walk-through and head downtown to set up our training room for the game, and then I am finished for the day. If we have an away game, I will be present at the walk-through, maybe do some light treatments afterward, and we have to check in at the airport at 1:30 for the flight.

"Sunday is game day. We arrive five hours before kick off to finish setting up the training room and prepare for the players' arrival. Before the game, we stretch, massage, treat, tape and brace play-



*Baugh works on Colts lineman Darrell Reid's hand in the RCA Dome in Indianapolis during the 2006 season.*