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The University of Georgia Partners with the National Center for Sports Safety to Conduct Continual Research Projects

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama – July 9, 2013 – The National Center for Sports Safety (NCSS) and The University of Georgia sports medicine staff have created one of the nation’s most unique partnerships that will generate extensive research studies, providing first hand insight into athletic injuries; promote appropriate management of injured athletes; and enhance the health and welfare of athletes of all ages.

The partnership was developed by combining the expertise of Chris Gillespie, long time Head Athletic Trainer and Director of Athletic Training Education at Samford University, the NCSS in Birmingham founded by Dr. Larry Lemak, and the UGA sports medicine staff headed by Ron Courson, UGA Sr. Associate Athletic Director and Director of Sports Medicine. UGA and the NCSS will serve as the central locations for research and experiential studies by Gillespie and the UGA staff.

The partnership is also a unique reunion among the three principle leaders. They began together in 1982 with Gillespie as a young athletic trainer at Samford, Courson as his first athletic training student, and Lemak a rising star in sports medicine. Thirty years later, both Gillespie and Courson have been inducted into the National Athletic Trainers’ Association Hall of Fame, while Lemak has become one of the world’s most respected orthopedic surgeons.

“In addition to our professional relationship with each other – we have remained loyal friends all these years and we know that we can trust each other enough to do something unique, different, and outside the box,” said Gillespie. “That’s truly special!”

Gillespie retired after working at the Birmingham, Ala., university for more than 30 years. He has worked as a clinician, educator, and administrator in athletic training and been active on numerous athletic training committees at the state, district, and national levels.

Gillespie has also served as president of the Alabama Athletic Trainers' Association and the Southeast Athletic Trainers' Association (SEATA). He is a former member of the Alabama Athletic Trainers' Association Licensure Task Force and served as Vice-Chair of the Alabama Board of Athletic Trainers for more than a decade. Gillespie also was a member of the Inter-Associational Task Force on Sickle Cell Trait in Athletes and has long been an advocate for athletes with the condition.

NCSS and UGA have already begun actively initiating the partnership. Last month NCSS and UGA presented the Emergency Care in Sports Conference, a free half day sports medicine seminar, available to members of the healthcare community on the UGA campus in Athens, Ga. A panel of medical professionals and UGA athletic training staff lectured on key topics including sickle cell trait management in the athlete, head and neck injuries, heat illness, on field emergency scenarios/emergency action planning, cardiac conditions and other athletic trauma management.

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“I am excited to have Chris join our sports medicine staff,” said Courson. “I have known Chris for more than 30 years – he is a nationally recognized athletic trainer and educator and will bring tremendous experience and knowledge to our program. In his new role, Chris will help lead us in a number of educational and research initiatives and be a mentor to our students and staff.”

“I am excited about the future here at Georgia as we grow a strong partnership with the National Center for Sports Safety and am thankful for my professional and personal relationships with Ron Courson and Dr. Larry Lemak,” said Gillespie. “I am humbled by and so appreciative of their efforts in making this opportunity a reality. I truly believe we will be able to do much at UGA to enhance the health and welfare of athletes worldwide.”

Courson joined the Georgia staff in 1995 and has become one of the nation’s leading experts in many areas of athletic training and sports medicine including the current national emphasis on concussion management.

Courson has been involved in many athletic training activities including work as an athletic trainer with the U.S. Olympic Team at the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul, South Korea, the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, Spain, and served as the chief athletic trainer for track and field for the Atlanta Committee for the 1996 Olympic Games (ACOG).

Courson is active in his profession, having served in many state, regional, and national roles including president of the SEC Sports Medicine Committee, chairman of the College and University Athletic Trainers' Committee of the National Athletic Trainers' Association and as a member of the NCAA Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports committee. He is a past medical liaison to the American Football Coaches Association and serves currently on the NFL Health and Safety Committee and the USA Football Medical Advisory Board.

Dr. Lemak is a world-renowned orthopedic surgeon with 40 years’ of sports medicine and orthopedic experience. He currently serves as the Medical Director for Major League Soccer (18 years), is one of the charter members of the Pop Warner Medical Advisory Board, and serves on the National Federation of High Schools Sports Medical Advisory Board, lending his knowledge and expertise to these and many other reputable organizations.

Not only is Dr. Lemak in the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame, he was the first physician to be inducted into the Alabama High School Athletic Association Hall of Fame for his devotion to the care and safety of high school athletes in the State of Alabama. Along with treating professional athletes; Dr. Lemak is the team physician for many high schools and colleges in Alabama; he is the Chairman and Founder of the Alabama Sports Foundation and involved in many community endeavors.

“I am very enthusiastic about this relationship and having the opportunity to work together again with two of the best athletic trainers I’ve known, said Dr. Lemak. “I feel that we will be able to accomplish many great achievements with these two fine organizations.”

For more information about the NCSS/UGA partnership, please call 866.508.NCSS (6277) or the UGA Sports Medicine office at 706-542-9060.

About NCSS:

Dr. Lawrence Lemak founded the National Center for Sports Safety in 2001 to promote the importance of injury prevention and safety on all levels of youth sports through education and research. NCSS focuses on decreasing the number and intensity of injuries through developing and teaching sports-safety courses. NCSS also collects, analyzes and researches injury data to improve safety practices.

About UGA Sports Medicine:

The UGA Sports Medicine Program provides injury prevention, care, rehabilitation services and education of recognized excellence to student-athletes. The program is led by the Director of Sports Medicine, Ron Courson, ATC, PT, NREMT-I, CSCS, a nationally recognized leader in the field of sports medicine. Courson will lead Gillespie in future research projects with the NCSS, taking sports safety education to the next level.

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