

SPORTS INJURY 101 Clintonians focus on sports injuries



Soccer players at Mississippi College participate in UMMC clinical trial

Special to The Clinton Courier

Coach Darryl Longabaugh remains pumped as he enters his twentieth season as leader of the Mississippi College Lady Choctaws soccer team.

"I'm excited," says Longabaugh, one of the premier coaches in the Gulf South Conference. He's not just fired up about the promising 2018 season on the field ahead. Longabaugh is thrilled his talented squad will participate in a first-of-its kind clinical trial by a research team at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson.

A \$30,000 grant from UMMC's Neuro Institute will make the research possible. The work involves seventy-five MC student-athletes on the men's and women's soccer teams. The month-long trial on the Clinton campus began August 11.

If a college soccer player has good reflexes and motor skills that help with movement on the field, it could be a factor

whether or not they take a hit resulting in a concussion, UMMC officials say.

The clinical trial also seeks to discover if their sensory abilities impacting move-

through the professional ranks. Reports show that one of every five high school athletes across the U.S. sustains sports-related concussions.

Longabaugh says the UMMC findings will be valuable for all thirty-six players on his team plus the coaches. "In soccer, we use

too, Longabaugh says.

The UMMC researchers aim to evaluate the effectiveness of aggressive physical therapy as "sensorimotor" training.

"We're taking healthy athletes, who have had a concussion in the past or not, and seeing if we can fine-tune their sensorimotor system," says

Dr. Jennifer Reneker, UMMC associate professor of physical therapy. "I believe if they have any underlying impairments, we can remedy that and decrease their risk of injury."

Lady Choctaws soccer players like Sam Carson, twenty-two, of England give the project a thumbs up. "I really did not think about concussions until I came here," says the Mississippi College senior and exercise science major. In soccer

games and practices, "quite often I use my head."

It's pretty cool, Carson said, to be part of this new research initiative linking the body with her favorite sport.

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Dr. Jennifer Reneker, associate professor of physical therapy, watches as soccer players Victor Bazan and Jorge Fernandez play a virtual reality game to track a flying fish without moving their heads.

ment can be adjusted for the better on the front end to lessen their chances of concussion. In addition, UMMC researchers seek to allow players to recover better and more quickly if they do suffer a concussion.

Nationwide, players, coaches and fans are increasingly aware of the dangers of sports injuries, from elementary school



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Dr. Kimberly Willis, associate professor of physical therapy, positions soccer players Cameron Allcorn, left, and Cayman Pearson on rubber stands that impact their balance to prepare them for a motor skills test.

our heads a lot," and players often hit the ground during games, he said.

While concussions involving football players – from high school through the NFL – get plenty of media attention, injuries for soccer players happen quite often,

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