

A Day in the Life



Meet Will

Will Utsey's life is sports—football, basketball, baseball, depending on the season. He can be found most days at Wheeler High School in Marietta, Ga., where he's a Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC) in the Sports Medicine Program at Children's. As an athletic trainer, he works with student athletes at the high school, and although he has no children of his own, he considers all 350 teens he works with his kids in some way.

When Will started at Children's, he was one of three ATCs. Today, the Sports Medicine Program has grown to 27, many of whom work with a designated school to support their athletic departments. Their role is to help prevent athletic injuries, rehabilitate athletes who are injured and to work with players both on and off the field. Every workday is different, but it's late fall in Georgia, which means it's football season. On this particular day, Will is preparing for his own Friday night lights.

A Day in the Life ...of a Certified Athletic Trainer

Will Utsey, Certified Athletic Trainer, Sports Medicine

⌚ **8:10 a.m.** – It's game day, and because Will worked late at the junior varsity football game last night, he sleeps in a little. He starts his day with a P90X workout before going online to check his email.

12:45 p.m. – Grabbing a quick tuna sandwich at Subway, he catches up on current events with a local paper. Will's work hours change daily, so he grabs a healthy meal when he can.

2:30 p.m. – Will arrives at Wheeler High School to meet with the head football coach. Together, they review injuries from Thursday night's game and discuss the plan for injured players. Will logs information about Derek, a player who sprained his ankle last night, and then he calls Derek's father to discuss the injury and how to care for it over the next few days.

3:30 p.m. – As school gets out, the treatment room fills up with students. Will examines a sprained ankle and calls the team physician to set up an appointment for the player. He starts to prepare the equipment for tonight's game, including coolers of ice, Gatorade, exam table, splint bag and crutches.

4:35 p.m. – A few hours before the game starts, Will begins taping the players up. The tape provides support to knees, ankles or other joints or limbs to prevent unnecessary sprains. Will loads the equipment onto the team's trailer and heads to Roswell High School for the start of tonight's away game.

6:28 p.m. – Will arrives and unloads his equipment onto the sidelines. As the players head out for warm-ups, Will meets with the other school's

athletic trainer. They discuss the location of the ambulance and what signal to use if there is an injury.

7:05 p.m. – As the players come off the field, Will notices that one player's knee sleeve is loose, so he makes a last-minute switch, putting a thicker sleeve with more compression on the player before heading out to the field to listen to the national anthem.

7:30 p.m. – It's kick-off time. Will plans to spend the entire game keeping his eyes peeled for any potential accident in the stadium that holds 4,000 people. "We don't get a lot of injuries in the crowds, but if we did, I have to be ready to assist," he explains.

8:30 p.m. – During the second quarter, a defensive back gets what the coaches call a "stinger." "It's actually a brachial plexus injury," Will says before talking with the player on the sidelines. Brachial plexus injuries are common among football players. Will and the team physician evaluate the player at halftime to test his strength, range of motion and level of neck pain.

10 p.m. – A successful field goal means that the Wheeler Wildcats win the game with a 17–14 victory. Post-game, Will heads to the locker room with the players to make sure there are no additional injuries and to talk with the father of the defensive back with the stinger injury. Will shares an information sheet on how to care for the injury at home over the weekend, and he makes plans to check in with the player and his family on Monday.

⌚ **11:30 p.m.** – After returning to Wheeler, Will gives his final injury report to the coach. "Although it's a win for the team tonight, I consider every game a victory when all of the players arrive home safely." ☀

