History of Ohio Stadium from a Medical Perspective

In the 75 years of Ohio Stadium, there have been four head team physicians: Dr. Walter E. Duffee, Dr. Richard Patton, Dr. Robert J. Murphy, and Dr. John A. Lombardo.

In 1913, L.W. St. John was hired by The Ohio State University to be its Athletic Director. He enticed James W. Wilce to come to Ohio State from Wisconsin to be the head football coach. One of the stipulations that Jack Wilce requested in coming to Columbus was the opportunity to attend medical school and become a physician. After settling in as a coach from 1913 to 1915, Jack entered Ohio State's School of Medicine and graduated in 1919. One of his classmates was Dr. Walter E. Duffee who graduated from medical school with him.

When the Ohio Stadium opened in 1922, Dr. Duffee was the Head Team Physician and continued in that role until his death in 1955. Dr. Duffee was not only a fine team physician but was also one of the "unforgettable characters" whom many of us meet through our lives. He was a superb after-dinner speaker, storyteller, and humorist and was an integral part of the Ohio State University from the early 1920s until his death. Walter was a confidante to all of the athletic directors and coaches at Ohio State University throughout this time.

In 1946, Dr. Duffee suffered a massive heart attack and was out of commission for a full year. Dr. Richard Patton was chosen as Team Physician. Dr. Patton was a general surgeon and an outstanding physician. He served from 1946 until 1971 when he accepted the position of Director of Surgical Education at Riverside Methodist Hospitals.

Dr. Bob Murphy joined Dr. Patton as an Associate Team Physician in 1952, and the two of them served together for the next 19 years. Dr. Murphy held the post of Head Team Physician from 1971 until 1993 when he retired. Dr. John Lombardo joined the Ohio State staff in 1990 and became Head Team Physician in 1993 at Dr. Murphy's retirement. Dr. Lombardo holds that post at the present time.

During the 1950s, Dr. Murphy's research on heat stroke, which was often fatal in athletics, resulted in a nation-wide change in patterns of behavior. Unlimited water was available to athletes after that time, and the result was a marked decrease in the number of heat stroke deaths in athletics.

A number of outstanding trainers have served the football teams in the Ohio Stadium. The first trainer was "Doc" Gurney who served in the teens and 1920s. Tucker Smith was a trainer from the 1920s through the early 1940s. Ernie Biggs served as Head Athletic Trainer from 1942 until 1971. Al Hart was the trainer for the next two years, but he suffered an untimely death due to cancer. Mike Bordner, Billy Hill, and Linda Daniel served as co-head trainers for the Athletic Department for the next 20 years. Bill Davis has been Head Athletic Trainer since 1994.

Throughout the entire history of the stadium, there have been hundreds of medical students, hospital residents, and student trainers who have served the athletic teams. Many of them are spread throughout the country in various capacities in college and professional athletics.