

## Athletic trainers, coaches keep eye on index, players

By GIUSEPPE UNGARO • Staff Writer • August 18, 2010

HAMMONTON -- It's not the heat. It's the humidity.

That is especially true when it comes to ensuring athletes are safe during summer training.

This summer has been one heat wave after another. Coaches and athletic trainers are keeping their eyes out for their young athletes' health, and on the heat index.

"When it's like this -- it's insane weather -- it's out of the ordinary even for August we take the heat index every hour," said Hammonton athletic trainer Donna DeLuca, who has been an Athletic Trainer for 18 years, including three at Hammonton. "We have a chart that tells you what modifications should be made.

"It's not so much the heat, but the humidity, like everybody says. If it's 85-degrees out with 70-percent humidity, the heat index could be more than 100. When it's at 105, you not supposed to exercise outside. At that point you would move to the gym."

Although it's true that the awareness about what the heat can do to athletes has risen, it doesn't mean that all athletes are well prepared.

Certain measures should be taken long before an athlete hits the field. According to DeLuca and National Athletic Trainers' Association guidelines, athletes should be pro active when it comes to exercising in the heat.

Players need to drink plenty of water, and stay away from caffeine. They also should eat lighter meals, with carbohydrates and protein.

Athletes, especially football players with all their equipment, also need to drink plenty of fluids during their practices.

Absegami High School has even started handing out pickle juice during practices because it supposedly combats heat sickness.

"I think there is more guidelines from national organizations like the (National Athletic Trainers Association)," DeLuca said. "And the NJSIAA has recommendations out. People are more aware, but people are also less acclimatized to the heat. The kids don't play outside anymore. It's a double-edged (sword). They know more to be safe, but in general they are inside more, especially this summer."

Coaches are also on board when it comes to the heat. It continues to be a major issue because of deaths at the NFL, college and high school levels in recent years.

"Times are definitely different today," Hammonton coach Pete Lancetta said. "We practiced twice today and will practice once tomorrow. It got pretty hot. Years ago, certainly when I played, we weren't even allowed to drink water. Until my senior year we had ice chips. You can't do that now. We know better.

"We give water breaks and even if they need more, we just have them hustle over for water. The good thing is we have trainers and Donna DeLuca does a great job."

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St. Joseph quarterback Darryl Smith (right) fakes the handoff to Gordon Hill on Aug. 11. Players, coaches and athletic trainers need to make sure they are safe in the heat this summer. (Staff photo/Max C. Levine)

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