

STHS sports medicine instructor brings real-world experience to classroom



Isaiah Tannaci demonstrates what the equipment in the Sports Medicine Center at STHS is used for. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Isaiah Tannaci doesn't have to rely on a textbook to answer a student's questions. There's a good chance whatever is asked he has the answer from personal experience.

Tannaci is not the ordinary high school instructor. His goal was never to be a teacher. And he's just starting to work on his credential. But none of that stopped Lake Tahoe Unified School District from hiring him to start this school year.

"We are thrilled to have someone with such a strong background

and passion to launch our new Sports Medicine Center at South Tahoe High School,” Principal Ivone Larson told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Students are excited too. The maximum – 90 students – signed up for this semester and for next semester.

Tannaci was a paramedic in Mount Shasta City when he got a call from a friend about the director job for the sports med program at STHS. He was blown away when he saw the facility. More equipment keeps arriving. It is state-of-the-art. Some of it is so new to the market Tannaci has only read about it.

While Tannaci was going to Southern Oregon State in Ashland, Ore., he became interested in athletic training. He has been a certified athletic trainer since 1998, has a bachelor’s in exercise physiology and a master’s in sports medicine. After he left Tahoe Fracture he went to paramedic school.



Exam tables for sports med students.

Tannaci has a million ideas for what he would like to do with the sports medicine facility. “Give it time” is the approach his superiors tell him to take.

One goal is to have students trained so there would be medical coverage at all school athletic practices and games. They would work under a certified athletic trainer in a similar manner to what goes on at the college level.

Through the emergency medicine side of the curriculum at STHS students could get enough education so they could volunteer for the National Ski Patrol. The minimum age to do so is 15. Between what STHS and Lake Tahoe Community College offer, students could become an emergency medical technician. Minimum age to do so is 18.

With this being the first semester for the program, intro to sports medicine is being taught multiple times so students have the basics. The program will grow to deal with emergency medicine, sports medicine and being a physical trainer.

As with most career and technical education programs, sports med has something for those who are college-bound, those who want a skill that will lead to a job, and those who want to dabble in something different.

The education is designed to flow into LTCC's offerings where this fall it's possible to obtain an associate of art's degree in kinesiology. It could also be a feeder program for Barton Health.

"I am excited about the uniqueness of this program and the opportunities it presents to the students of STHS. I think it matches well with the internship program that Barton Health has, and that the exposure to sports medicine will foster more students to choose a career in medicine," orthopedist Terry Orr said.

Even though Tannaci grew up a ski racer in Mount Shasta City, he is very familiar with Lake Tahoe.

He worked for Orr from 2002-08 when he was part of Tahoe Fracture. The two had met when both were working for the U.S. Ski Team. Tannaci was the athletic trainer for the team from 1998-2002. He was the men's ski team's head trainer during the Salt Lake City Olympics in 2002. (The traveling is what made him want to stop being involved with the ski team.)

“He was involved in all aspects of treatment of world-class athletes ranging from emergency triage on the race course to recovery from surgery. Isaiah has seen it all and lived it. The experiences he has had in the treatment of our nation’s best athletes brings a relevance to his teaching that would be hard to match,” Orr told *Lake Tahoe News*.