Information Item #1
Department of Athletics Update
(Pat Chun)

Athletic Director Pat Chun will provide a verbal Athletics update on the following:

A. Student-Athlete Wellbeing Initiative – joint initiative with Behind Happy Faces and Step Up focusing on education and research

ATTACHMENT: Athletics to hold mental health training – Daily Evergreen Article
Athletics to hold mental health training

Course designed to promote awareness, teach students how to help, notice signs
Jerry Pastore, associate director of athletics, discusses new student-led mental health initiatives Thursday in Bohler Athletic Complex. "They walk out the door with coping skills," he said.

WSU Athletics and the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) are starting training sessions for student-athletes that combine a mental health training program and a bystander intervention program.

The program is called Strength is Asking for Help: Athlete to Athlete Mental Health Training and combines two programs into one, said Jerry Pastore, associate director of athletics, student-athlete development and well-being. He said the training starts Sunday.

"By the time the person leaves they have an awareness of mental health, they have an awareness of how to take care of themselves ... and they walk out the door with coping skills," he said.

One of the programs implemented in the training is Behind Happy Faces, a course that includes the mental health challenges everyone faces. It is built to help people cope with mental health and balance it, Pastore said.

The other program used in the training is Step Up. Step Up is a bystander intervention program that helps people notice a problem, interpret the problem, assume the responsibility as the bystander, know how to help and find the right help, he said.

This will be the first time these two courses have been used in the same program for mental health training, Pastore said.
The program will be evaluated by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to determine which parts of the program are effective and what needs to be taken out, he said.

When the athletes come in for the training, they will take a survey before they start and another when the program is over. The data from these surveys will be given to UNC Greensboro to see how effective the peer-to-peer training is, Pastore said.

This program is in conjunction with Hilinski’s Hope, he said. The organization brought the mental health experts to WSU and paid for them to train the student-athletes who are facilitating the program.

The goal of this program is that once UNC Greensboro gives its feedback for the program, Hilinski’s Hope will take it and try to branch it out to other universities, Pastore said.

This training is a pilot program for student-athletes at WSU and the athletes will go through training sessions facilitated by the SAAC, Pastore said.

“SAAC has really taken this on as their initiative,” Pastore said. “This is where they really want to make a difference.”

The SAAC is made up of volunteer student-athletes who care about mental health. They are trying to create an atmosphere where people feel comfortable talking about mental health, said Tierney Silliman, a track and field athlete and member of SAAC.

The SAAC works to better the lives of other student-athletes during their time at school, Silliman said. They are working to create a sense of community among athletes and want to bring athletes from all sports together.

The training sessions will consist of a series of exercises targeted to help people’s understanding of mental health, said Nathan Wadhwani, a track and field athlete and member of SAAC as well. The idea is to reduce the stigma around mental health issues and to encourage people to think about their mental health.

“There’s basically a series of exercises that we do that are targeted to kind of help our understanding of mental health and give us some exercises to improve that,” Wadhwani said.

The training includes a presentation explaining the importance of mental health and group exercises that educate participants on its different aspects, he said.
"It’s really interactive," Silliman said. "For example, we’ll talk about coping methods and what do you do when a situation happens."

The goal is to recognize that no one’s mental health is perfect, Wadhwani said. There are always ways to improve and it should not be something people set aside.

Pastore said he hopes to have 30 people attend the first training session and as many athletes as possible go through the program throughout the semester. He said the training will also be given to all incoming athletes.

About the Writer

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(Kyle is a junior majoring in multimedia journalism and public relations from Vancouver, Washington)