



FREDDIE WAPPEL

A Trainer for All Seasons

By Steve Richardson

Deep in the maze of tunnels and practice rooms in the Hearnes Multipurpose Building, the steady babbling of a whirlpool and the ripping of tape join in a chorus with the telephone. There is a scent of soap and gauze that permeates the surroundings which include equipment for the rehabilitation for almost any minor athletic injury.

This is the province of Fred Wappel, head trainer for Missouri since 1958 and nationally known in college athletics circles. At 5-4½, Wappel is dwarfed by the athletes he serves, but he's a big man in Tiger sports. His word is respected by players and coaches alike. A simple decision by Wappel not to play an athlete might change the complexion of any of Mizzou's athletic contests.

Early in the morning of a normal day this fall, Fred Wappel already was making decisions in his glass-enclosed office. He had received three calls and as many visits by athletes who popped into his office to talk about their injuries. Defensive back Kenny Downing, receiver Ted Beckett and linebacker Mike Fagan were getting treatments from assistant trainer Mike Proffitt.

The facilities in Hearnes include one room of resistive exercise equipment, a steam room, a room with a sunken whirlpool and a large training room with therapeutic modalities such as ultra-sound equipment, cold units and hot pads. The facilities at the football training room are similar, but not quite so extensive. They compare favorably with the athletic training complexes of any university.

Wappel credits his success at Missouri to the *esprit de corps* of the athletic department.

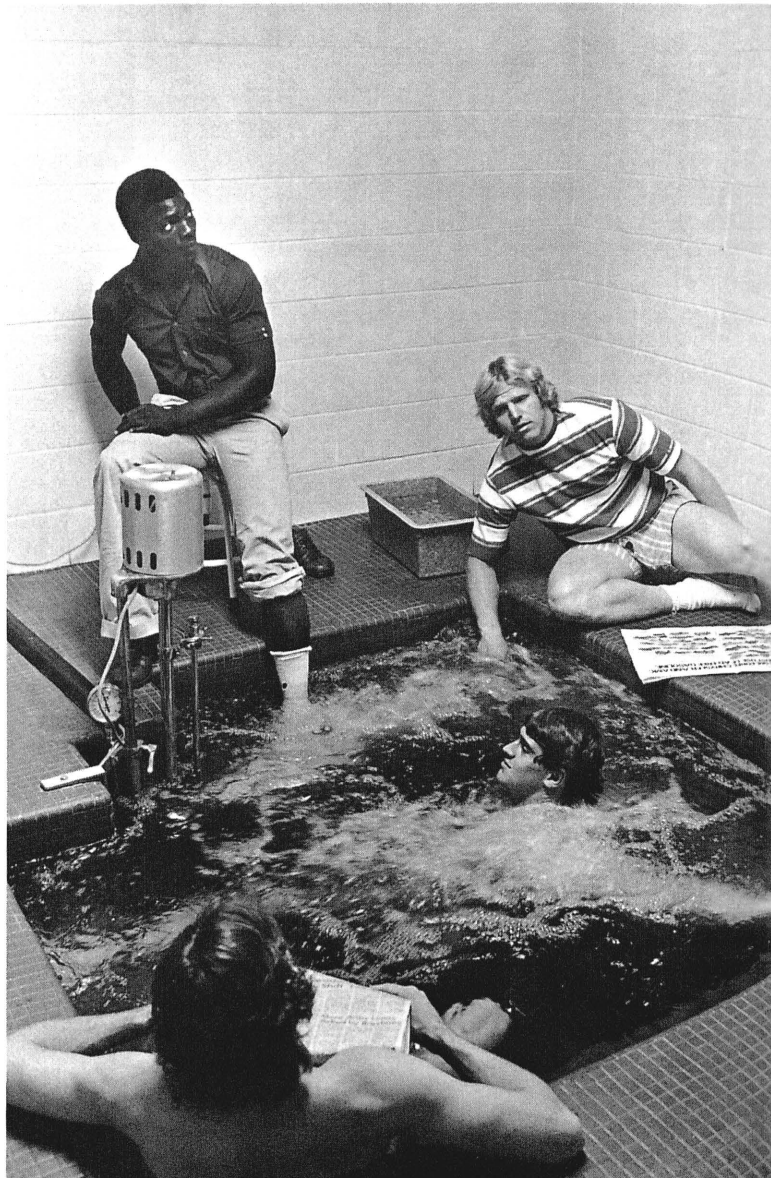
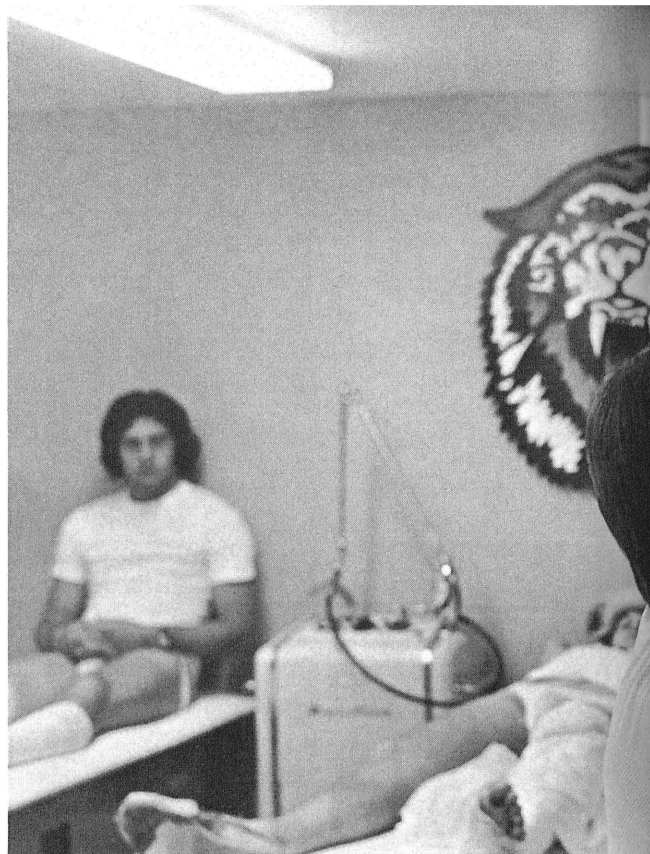
"I think you really have to envision a total medical team," says Wappel. "It all starts with the coaches. I have to have their cooperation. They must understand that an athlete can be hurt. Then the team physicians, the student health services and the orthopedic surgeons enter in. My success can only be a reflection of their cooperation and competence." Team physician is Dr. James Baker, who has treated the Tigers since 1938.

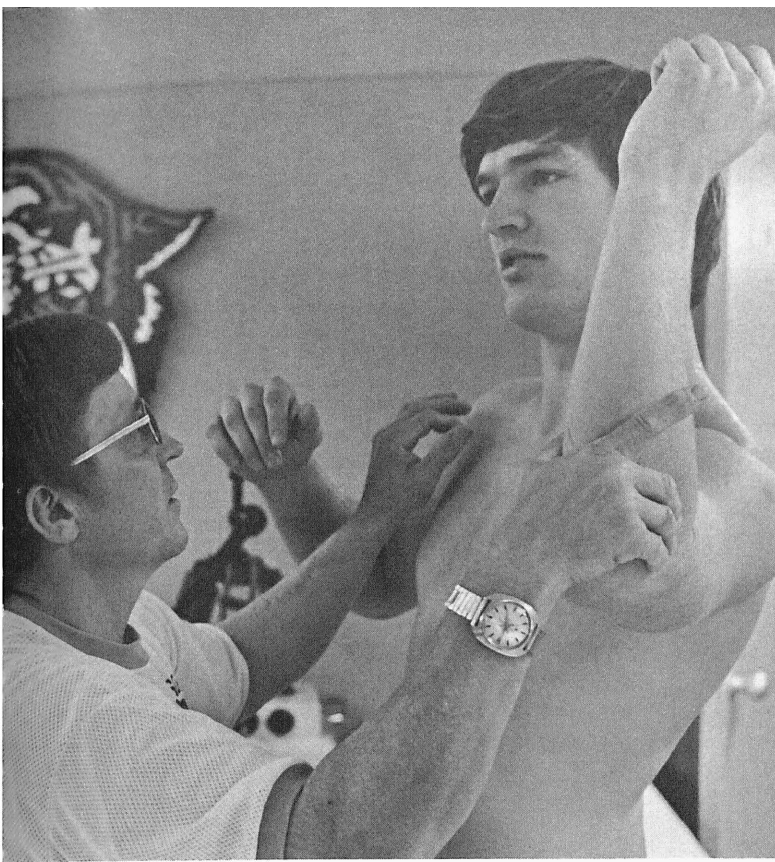
But the key, Wappel says, is to get the coaches' cooperation. And at Mizzou, he has that. Each day injury reports are posted in the coaches' locker room, both training rooms, and are given to each coach together with workouts individually prescribed for each injured player.

"The coaches here give me an opportunity to get athletes well," says Wappel, "and I think that's

A trainer at Missouri since 1955, Freddie Wappel has the experience and the know-how to treat Tiger athletes when the need arises.

Training facilities at both the practice fields and the Multipurpose Building are especially busy during football, but wrestler Jim Wageman, upper right, isn't forgotten, either. Below, Wappel talks with quarterback Steve Piskiewicz. In whirlpool at right are, clockwise, fullback Anise Davis, linebacker Lynn Evans, slotback Rick Cook, and linebacker Mark Kirkpatrick (back to camera). Wappel makes sure players are well before letting them play.





what makes the University unusual. We think our athletes should be fit before they play. Other people from other universities sometimes say, 'You have a lot of surgery.' And I say, 'Yes, we do, but we don't hide any of our injuries either.'"

"Freddie tells us what players aren't going to play," says Al Onofrio, the Tigers' head football coach, "and we respect his decision. Our staff and I have so much confidence in him."

After each football game injured players are examined by Wappel and their problems diagnosed by Dr. Baker. Non-emergency treatment starts on Sunday morning, usually in the free-and-breezy atmosphere of the training rooms. Players are picked up between classes during the week at designated points on Campus, treated, then taken back to classes. During football season, players are also treated in the afternoon at the practice field and allowed to work out on their own until recovery.

Rate of recovery is aided by the modern equipment and the exercise rooms, but how fast a player gets well depends a lot on the athlete himself, Wappel says. That fact makes Wappel part corrective therapist, part psychologist.

"You have to be positive with the athlete, not negative," says Wappel. "I have seen so many times where a trainer will tell an athlete that an injury is in his head. I have never held that idea. You have to discriminate between an injury that will hurt his future and one that will not. This is where the total medical team comes in. I think it is important to be honest with the athlete about his injury."

One scholarship athlete, split end Jim Sharp, had an injury after the Sun Bowl last year and, because the orthopedic surgeons at Boone County Hospital

in Columbia didn't feel capable of treating the injury, Sharp was sent to St. Louis. All this for an athlete who will never play another down for the Tigers.

And don't get the idea, either, that Missouri is an impersonal behemoth that cares only for its biggest money producer, football.

"I am interested in our total program," Wappel says. "We work just as hard with a swimmer as we do with a football player. We help the volunteer walk-ons even after they have been cut, if they are injured. We will treat them until they are well. We feel a responsibility toward these people." In keeping with the tradition of care at Missouri, all athletes are examined at the end of each sport's competitive season.

"He sure treats everybody equally," says linebacker Scott Pickens. "If someone gets injured on the tenth team, he will treat him just as good as someone on the first team. He's an awfully good guy."

Wappel, now 44, came to Missouri in 1955 and in 1958 was made head trainer, replacing the legendary Ollie DeVictor, who had been the trainer for such famous coaches as Pop Warner, Jim Conzelman, Jock Sutherland, and of course, the Tigers' Don Faurot. Wappel had been a corrective therapist in a veterans' hospital and a boys' school before arriving in Columbia, and also had served a stint with a semi-pro football team. He was a student trainer in the late 40s at the University of Illinois, where he had to take basic science courses because no classes geared specifically to athletic training were available. Now athletic training is more professional, and Wappel has grown with it.

"Back in the days of Pop Warner, training techniques were kept secret," said Wappel. "They thought if someone found out their training methods, the opponents might get their people well more quickly and win with them."

"But in 1949, the National Association of Athletic Trainers was organized. It was thought people should become more proficient and shouldn't hide treatment procedures. Through exchange of ideas trainers can help each other. And I am for exchanging ideas, because I feel it's good professionally."

The profession may have been good to Wappel, but Fred has been good for the profession, too. In 1960 and 1965 he was given the N.A.A.T.'s medal for the contributions he had made to athletic training. □