

Physical Therapists Help 'Canes Return to Competition

Building champions at the University of Miami requires more than having great athletes. UM is committed to providing a culture of well-being for student-athletes and staff, and top-notch physical therapy is a crucial piece of the puzzle.



From left, Tristen Asken, D.P.T., Luis A. Feigenbaum, D.P.T., and Jeffrey T. Ruiz, D.P.T.

[Luis Feigenbaum](#), D.P.T., PT, SCS, ATC, LAT, director of rehabilitation, is focused on building champions, all while building the Department of Physical Therapy for Hurricane athletics. Student-athlete wellness is essential for competing at the highest level, and he ensures that each student-athlete gets the proper rehab in order to compete at their full potential.

Feigenbaum, a two-time UM alumnus, got involved with the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics in 1999, while a graduate student in the Miller School of Medicine's physical

therapy program. Since then, he has contributed his time to UM's athletes by offering the highest level of rehab in collegiate athletics.

"We have a unique relationship here," Feigenbaum said. "We are probably one of the only programs with the Department of Physical Therapy on the academic side and clinical side that interacts with athletics."

Two other physical therapists also contribute to the program. [Jeff Ruiz](#), D.P.T., PT, works primarily with athletes in Olympic sports, while [Tristen Asken](#), D.P.T., PT, OCS, works mainly with the football team.

Feigenbaum, Ruiz and Asken all mentor student-interns, as well as sports physical therapy residents, in a program that is new this year. The two residents for the 2017-18 academic year are [Julian Rivera](#), D.P.T., PT, and [Julia Rapicavoli](#), D.P.T., PT.

"Every time I bring someone on, we can take on more students and more residents, so each one of us here is a multiplier of upwards of two to four bodies of help," Feigenbaum said.

The sports physical therapy residency program was created to provide more expertise to residents in the field of sports physical therapy. These residents are licensed physical therapists and athletic trainers.

"We're looking to bring academic medicine into athletics, so we have the cream of the crop in terms of physical therapists who are here to help athletes get back," Feigenbaum said. "The outcomes we have here at UM are top-tier in terms of a resource standpoint and an outcome standpoint compared to most

programs nationally.”

Depending on the severity of an injury, the rehab process can take anywhere from six to nine months and upwards of a year. With each therapy session lasting an average of one hour, the department has high standards for selecting residents, interns and programs.

“Meeting the expectations of the University of Miami athletic program requires a lot of help and a lot of expertise,” Feigenbaum said.

Feigenbaum, Asken and Ruiz all work with the athletic trainers regarding rehab plans and utilize them as a resource to communicate with the coaches and weight room staff. Once an athlete reaches the end of their rehab, the athletic trainers become more involved with monitoring the return-to-play timeline for each athlete.

Building champions relies heavily on building the departments that focus on the development and well-being of the athletes who represent UM, and Feigenbaum, Ruiz and Asken ensure they provide only the best.