

Former All-American returns to UW-Eau Claire as team physician - Leader-Telegram: Sports

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By Jesse O'Brien Leader-Telegram staff | Posted: Saturday, August 23, 2014 11:45 pm



Austin Crow

Former UW-Eau Claire All-American defensive lineman Austin Crow is returning to his alma mater to work as a team physician.

Sometimes when Austin Crow is working with an injured athlete, his patient will look at him and tell him some variation of "It feels fine, I'm ready to get back to it."

He can see in their eyes they mean it, but when the body isn't ready, it just isn't ready. And Crow can sympathise with them, because he's been there too.

A three-time All-WIAC defensive lineman and an All-American honorable mention while playing for the UW-Eau Claire football team, Crow had his share of injuries. And he knows what it feels like to be unable to play the sport you love.

"To understand what drives these athletes, I think that gives me a lot of insight into how to treat them," he said. "So when they come and say 'this is preventing me from doing what I'm passionate about, I really try to take them seriously and do whatever I can to try and get them back at full strength."

His experience competing in collegiate athletics has helped him with numerous athletes during his residency at UW-Madison and his fellowship at the University of Virginia, and it will continue to help him this season when he returns to the UW-Eau Claire sidelines as a team physician.

He joins Chippewa Valley Orthopedics and Sports Medicine, where he'll provide orthopedic care in addition to his role with the university athletics programs.

Crow graduated from UW-Eau Claire in 2004 with a degree in biology before attending St. Louis University School of Medicine. His wife Jessie also graduated from UW-Eau Claire, and the city happened to be almost the midpoint of their two hometowns — Jessie is from Mauston and Austin from Woodbury, Minn. — making trips to take their two young boys to see grandma and grandpa much more manageable.

"We have a lot of history here, and location-wise it just seemed perfect," Crow said. "Of course, kind of the icing on the cake is being able to take care of the Blugolds."

But it's not just Crow's history with the university that landed him the job — he's highly experienced as well. During his five-year residency in Madison, Crow had opportunities to work the sidelines with the Badgers football team, and he did the same during his one-year fellowship at Virginia.

Knowing he wanted to go into sports medicine, Crow jumped at every opportunity he could to work with the Badgers staff, even if it meant doing physicals for all the incoming athletes at the beginning of each season.

"The big one was always crew," Crow said. "There's like 200 people on the UW crew team."

Though he'll also do some work with the hockey team, Crow's focus mostly will be on the football team, where he'll be surrounded by familiar faces. Coach Todd Glaser was the Blugolds' defensive coordinator in Crow's All-American season, in which Crow recorded 69 tackles — 20 for loss — and 12 sacks. UW-Eau Claire finished 8-2 that year and claimed a share of the WIAC title.

Crow noted that it was Glaser who was a main proponent for him to get some early playing time, and Glaser was equally complimentary of his former player — sort of.

"Austin was a very good football player for us — just don't tell him I said that," he joked.

Glaser praised Crow's work ethic and leadership, noting that his intelligence — Crow was a conference scholar-athlete in 2003 — helped set him apart.

"He's just a good person, Glaser said. "He's got a great personality and I think our kids will gravitate to him."

Crow also will work alongside Dr. John Drawbert, who has been a Blugolds team physician since 1987.

In fact, it was during one of the numerous times Drawbert changed out Crow's cast during the football season that Crow once related he'd like to return to UW-Eau Claire as a team physician.

"He was sort of like 'Oh, that sounds cool,' and on the inside, it turns out he was chuckling a little bit," Crow said.

As it so happens, the veteran doctor heard that line pretty frequently from the endless stream of patients that had come through his office in his many years with the team. But more than a decade later, Crow's wish has come true.

"To have the opportunity to come back and give to the university that gave so much to me — I can't count the life lessons and experience I had while I was here," Crow said. "So to be able to give back to the university and this community is awesome."