

UC's Stringer Institute teams up with Timex

By Heather Lake, Chronicle Staff Writer

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STORRS – Kelci Stringer, the wife of the former Minnesota Vikings player Korey Stringer, who died of heat stroke during training drills in 2001, wanted something positive to come from the tragedy.

The Korey Stringer Institute at the University of Connecticut was founded in April 2010 – as part of a wrongful death suit with the NFL.

Timex announced Monday that KSI, part of **UConn's Neag School of Education and the nation's top doctoral school in kinesiology**, has entered into a three-year partnership with Timex.

UConn's Director of Athletic Training Education Douglas Casa is a reputed expert on heat stroke caused by exertion and exercising in the heat and served as an expert witness in civil trials related to Korey Stringer's death.

Casa worked with Kelci Stringer to found the institute, on which she serves as the CEO.

"They wanted to have some lasting legacy that would honor her husband," said Casa.

At present, six doctoral students and two faculty, including Casa, are working with tri-athletes from around the world who are participating in the Ford Iron Man World Championships in Kona, Hawaii.

The KSI team is studying what factors influence performance safety in the heat and how quickly the athletes recover under various conditions. For example, some of the athletes are, after extreme exertion, immediately cooled via cold water immersion, while others are not, Casa explained.

"These are people going all out in the heat for 10 to 12 hours," said Casa. "We're measuring them right after the race, two mornings after...a week later."

The study is just one of many things the institute has become involved in since it was founded.

Its three largest supporters are Timex, the NFL, and Gatorade.

In August, the UConn men's soccer team participated in a similar study to determine the relationship of on-field real-time practice heart rate and GPS data for speed and distance.

Using GPS to determine heart rate provides bio-markers that will help Timex develop devices to provide athletes with specific cues to their bodies biological needs during and exertion.

The athletes wear monitors, produced by Timex, that can track speed, distance and pace. Researchers are also using ingestible thermistors – pills that measure and transmit core body temperatures wirelessly.

"This partnership will enable Timex to utilize first-hand research data related to a number of integral training elements including heart rate, pace, body/skin temperature and fitness level to improve training techniques and develop innovative new products for athletes of all levels," said Herberito Calves, vice president of marketing for Timex.

Over the next three years, professional and college athletes – including some from UConn – will participate in various research studies. Casa is looking forward to an upcoming study with the New York Giants.

"This is a great partnership working with some of the best athletes in the world," Casa said.

This is a big investment for Timex, as well.

"We plan on integrating all of our assets into these studies to ensure we offer training solutions that will truly impact performance and safety during training and competitions," said Calves.

When Korey Stringer died, he was participating in drills during 90-degree heat.

Kelci Stringer has been working with Casa since the institute was formed in an effort to raise awareness regarding heat-related safety issues.

Casa and his team from the institute are also involved in advocacy and policy making. They've worked with such notables as the U.S. Army and the NCAA – and what it ultimately boils down to is safety.

"What athletes and coaches need to know," Casa said, "is that using the proper training equipment can enhance their results, while maximizing and managing their safety and recovery."