

Beijing Bound

UNH's Ben Towne heads to the Olympic Winter Games

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For nearly 15 years, clinical assistant professor of kinesiology Ben Towne has been working with Olympic-level athletes, specifically the U.S. Bobsled/Skeleton team. For the second time in his career, he will accompany the team to the 2022 winter Olympics – this time in Beijing – as part of the USA Olympic medical staff.

Towne is an athletic trainer; his job entails treating acute injuries, managing pre-existing injuries and overall preparing athletes for Olympic competition. “Athletic trainers are responsible for all aspects of the patient’s well being, and on any given day we may be treating an athlete with the flu, a concussion or a hamstring strain,” he says. “There really is a broad scope of what we do in our clinical practice. Essentially we are the link between an athlete and the broader health care system.”

Towne's experience working with professional athletes dates back to 2006 when he first applied to the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee Sports Medicine Volunteer program. He was accepted and completed immersive athletic training experiences with athletes and sports of all types at the Olympic Training Center in Lake Placid, New York. He was then invited to work with the U.S. Bobsled/Skeleton athletes at team trials in Park City, Utah. His first international competition was in 2008 at the World Championships in Altenberg, Germany. Since then, he's been a part of the regular medical staff each year. His first trip to the Olympics was the Winter Games in 2014, in Sochi, Russia.

"My experience as part of the USA Olympic medical staff has allowed me access to other health care providers to stay up to date with the most current and effective treatment methods and practices, Towne says. "It has forced me to 'stay on my toes' and to continually study and practice when I can. And it has allowed me to bring those experiences back to the classroom, whether it's sharing a story or teaching new manual techniques to students."

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