The Cornell Daily Sun

Wrestling Team Practice Goes Awry
Cornell staffer struck by weight, airlifted

October 10, 2008 - 12:00am
By Peter Finocchiaro and Elizabeth Manapsal

Yesterday, an older female staff member was walking down Baker Staircase across the street from Libe Slope when she was struck by a 45-lb. rubber plate and fell down the stairs.

Three members of the Cornell wrestling team, supervised by an assistant coach, were doing sprint exercises on Libe Slope when one of the plates rolled across West Avenue and struck the woman in the back.

According to Simeon Moss '73, director of Cornell press relations, the woman was airlifted by a Medevac helicopter to Arnett Ogden Medical Center in Elmira, N.Y.

"[The victim] is in stable condition. She is conscious and alert. She suffered a fractured skull, broken ribs, as well as an injury to her left hand," Moss said.

The three team members who were working out on Libe Slope were performing a routine exercise for wrestlers who have sustained injuries to their ankles and knees. The other 30 members of the team were practicing elsewhere at the time of the incident.

Andy Noel, director of athletics and physical education, described the rubber plate that hit the woman as 5-inches wide.

"It's kind of like a little tire. It's very heavy," he said.

Noel explained that this specific routine, which has been a part of the team's training regiment for injured athletes for many years, has been dropped from the program in light of yesterday's incident.

According to Noel, wrestling coach Rob Koll asserted that the exercise would be discontinued.

"We'll never do this exercise again. Even if it's a one in a million chance [of this incident happening], we'll abandon that work out," Noel said. "This is one of those accidents that occurs that is so upsetting you make whatever adjustments you need to make."

"100 percent of our concern is with the person that was injured," Noel continued.

It is unconfirmed whether legal repercussions will result from the incident.

"I don't know that we've even really thought about [legal repercussions]," Moss said. "The University is just concerned about the woman's safety at this point."

Moss added that it is currently hard to judge if the University will be held accountable.

“No one has been charged with any crime,” Moss said. “It was a terrible accident.”

CUEMS, the Ithaca Fire Department, Cornell Environmental Healthy and Safety and Bangs Ambulance were present at the scene.

According to Moss and Ryan O’Halloran ‘09, director of CUEMS, the circumstances that led to the woman’s fall are currently under investigation by the CUPD.

Zachary Gerow ‘10 arrived at the scene of the accident moments after it occurred.

“The wrestlers were sitting around in a circle with their heads bowed. People were standing around in awe as she was carried on a stretcher and taken away in an ambulance,” Gerow said.