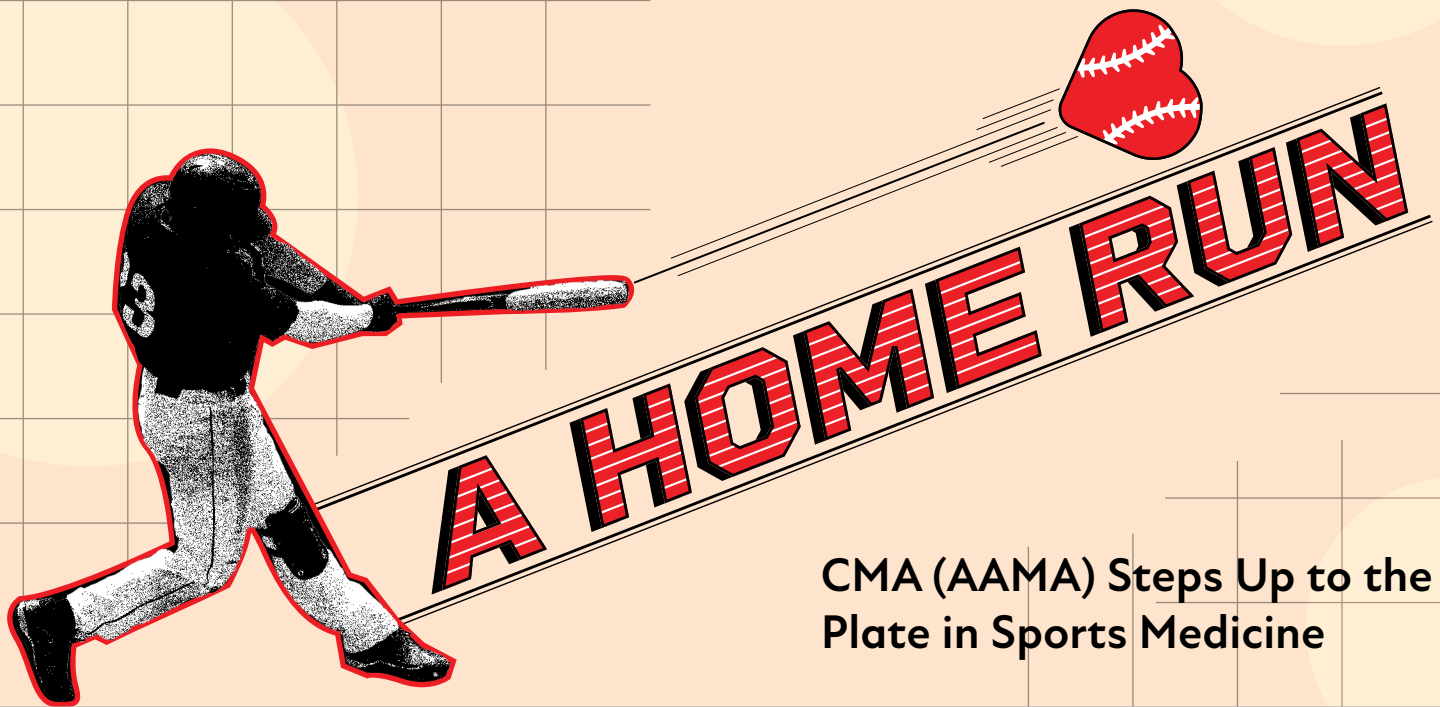




CMA (AAMA) Steps Up to the Plate in Sports Medicine



By Cathy Cassata

After retiring from the U.S. Air Force with 23 years of service, Mike Radke, CMA (AAMA), found himself experiencing an adjustment period. “The military lifestyle has structure—work, leadership academies, family services, cost of living allowances, et cetera,” says Radke. “Then, as soon as you enter a civilian workforce [in which] everyone is on their own with less accountability, you face a thick brick wall that you have to either break through or climb over.”

At a loss for what to do next, he began soul-searching, which led him to the realization that since 1991, his occupation has always been medically oriented.

“Ten years into my military service, I was selected to become a combat training instructor for [the] U.S. Air Force’s European [headquarters]. Then, 9/11 changed everything. [I had] thirteen deployments, was one of the first boots on [the] ground supporting Operation Enduring Freedom, and [was]

one of the original logistic coordinators for Operation Iraqi Freedom,” says Radke. “I was also in charge of search and recovery operations and directed the regional mortuary collection point stationed out of Qatar.”

After some self-reflection, he felt a calling to obtain medical assisting skills. In 2017, at 47 years old, Radke received an associate of occupational studies degree in medical assisting. For the next three years, he worked as a medical assisting educator in a neurology clinic and for Cancer Treatment Centers of America until it closed its Tulsa, Oklahoma, location.

“I was approached by [Oklahoma University (OU)] Health Physicians in Tulsa to work in their Center for Exercise and Sports Medicine clinic. I’ve now been here for three-and-a-half years,” says Radke.

Part of his role includes supporting the teaching of medical students in the OU School of Community Medicine during their family medicine and sports medicine rotations. He assists shadowing residents and students when they are collecting patients’ medical histories, taking patients’ vital signs, and presenting the patient to the attending physician. “I loved teaching medical assisting students, and, in the military, I enjoyed engaging in combat training, but I never imagined I’d be a part of someone else’s education again,” says Radke.

His other day-to-day tasks involve car-

ing for patients with bone-related injuries, such as knee and back issues. The clinic also treats concussion-related events, something near and dear to Radke.

“As a combat veteran, I’ve had many bone and joint injuries and three concussions, with one classified as a traumatic brain injury,” he says. “When I initially see patients [with concussion], I know exactly what they’re going through, and it’s rewarding to support them.”

He also gives back to his favorite pastime. Through the OU Sports Medicine Fellowship program, Radke helps administer medical support for the Los Angeles Dodgers Double-A affiliate minor league team, the Tulsa Drillers. OU Health Physicians in Tulsa also provides treatment to collegiate-level athletes.

“I was born and raised in California and grew up being a diehard Dodgers fan. Even though caring for professional athletes is just a fraction of my duties, it’s an absolute honor and highlight of my job and life,” he says.

Even so, connecting with patients in the community is what Radke thrives on most.

“As much as I love intermingling with professional competitive athletes, my most satisfying time is using my skills and personal experience to connect with everyday patients alongside a tight-knit sports medicine team,” he says. “My life gave me ultimate success and total failure. It made me a better person and a worthy medical assistant.” ♦