It looked as incongruous as it sounds, like gladiators in repose. Minus the armor, or in this case, numbered uniforms and protective gear, members of the University of Miami Hurricanes football team were preparing for the season—with their eyes closed.

Last month, players wedged into theater-style seating in an out-of-the-way room in the Hecht Athletic Center to participate in their fourth straight week of “mindfulness” training. In addition to training players’ bodies, head coach Al Golden is partnering with an internationally recognized neuroscientist, Amishi Jha, to train players’ minds.

As they entered the room, each player was handed a 5-by-7-inch card. On the front, above a photo of the team racing onto the field through a dry ice fog, were the words, “One Breath ... One Mind ... One Heartbeat.” On the flip side was the day’s lesson and an image of a bowed man carrying the world on his shoulders.

“Lower or close your eyes, bringing your attention if you will to the inbreath... then the outbreath... aware that you’re breathing in, aware that you’re breathing out, bringing awareness, something that you haven’t recruited [in the lesson] so far...”

The players closed their eyes, and the session began.

Researchers are giving the UM football team ‘mindfulness’ training to help players on the field and want to do the same with soldiers going into combat.

BY KITTY DUMAS
Special to the Miami Herald

Researchers are giving the UM football team ‘mindfulness’ training to help players on the field and want to do the same with soldiers going into combat.
**Mindfulness from a**

Katey Stone, the head coach of the University of Miami's football team, described how she introduced mindfulness training to her players. "It was the idea to bring mindfulness into our lives," she said. "To help players stay centered, to help them make better decisions, and to help them cope with stress." She began by teaching the players a simple breathing exercise: "Breathe in, breathe out. Feel the air moving through your body. Feel the air leaving your body." The players found the exercise helpful, and they started to use it during practice and games.

Stone also introduced the idea of "moment-by-moment awareness". "When you're playing football, it's all about the present moment," she explained. "You can't think about what happened in the past or what will happen in the future. You just have to focus on what's happening right now." The players quickly caught on, and they started to use this approach in their games.

Stone also taught the players how to develop "radical compassion". "It's about being kind to yourself and others," she said. "It's about being non-judgmental and accepting yourself and others for who you are." The players found this approach helpful, and they started to use it in their lives.

After a few weeks of training, the players began to see the benefits of mindfulness. "The players are calmer, more focused, and more resilient," Stone said. "They're able to handle stress better, and they're more likely to make good decisions." She also noticed that the players were more likely to work together as a team.

Stone's approach to mindfulness training was successful, and it helped the players become better athletes. "The players have become more focused, more resilient, and more competitive," she said. "They're able to handle stress better, and they're more likely to make good decisions.""