



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

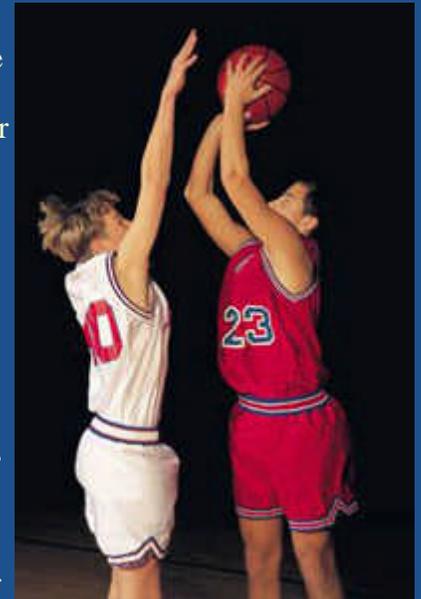
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Raising the Child Athlete

Millions of children are participating in organized sports programs each year. Most of these children are having fun, exercising and learning valuable lessons about team work and goal setting that will last a lifetime. This group above is about 80 percent of the population of athletic participants. The other 20 percent are quitting or getting hurt. The question we have to ask ourselves is 20 percent an acceptable drop-out rate for anything. Would we accept a 20 percent drop out rate in school, in any class, in healthcare? Are there things that we can do as coaches and parents that will improve the experience of athletic participation, and help more kids experience the lessons that only athletics can teach?

The percentage of kids participating in sports has increased over the last 10 years. The highest percentage of participation of kids in sports is in baseball, basketball and soccer. Sports such as gymnastics, wrestling, track and field all have their following but are statistically insignificant compared to baseball, basketball and soccer. Sports psychologists note the shift in participation from Olympic to more popular sports because of the amount of heavy commercialism in pro- sports. Physical Education programs use to use Olympic sports to develop early developmental skills, but many programs have been changed to make them more popular or cancelled all together with growing pressure to spend more time on traditional academics. Early introduction into advanced sports without developing basic fundamental movement skills is proving to decrease the durability of our athletes, and making them lose interest at a much earlier age.



Injury rates in children participating in sports have only been tracked closely since 1986. 1/3 of sports injuries occur in kids between the ages of 5 to 14 years old. The U.S. Consumer Safety Commission reported that over 12 million children in the above stated age bracket sought treatment for injuries that occurred during organized sports. Kids get hurt when they play it happens right? Well your half right kids get hurt more when they play one thing to long or to hard. 60 percent of those that sought medical treatment because of injuries had what is termed overuse injuries. In other words they did the same thing to much with too much intensity. Over use injuries occur when repetitive stressful activities take place on the body kids are especially prone to these conditions because the bones are soft and the muscles bones and ligaments are tight due to growth. The most common overuse injuries in kids today are from throwing (baseball), knee pain(soccer, basketball, running), and low back pain (flexing and extending the spine without the strength to maintain balance in the middle of the body, soccer, basketball and gymnastics.) Prevention of these injuries is possible with the right warm-up and cool-down techniques, good training habits, and most importantly have a good fundamental base of movement to start with.

Injuries are only one reason why kids stop playing another is the negative experience of athletics all together. Bad coaching, to much pressure from their coaches, parents or not enough playing time are all reasons why

20 percent of the kids stop playing. 75 percent of kids polled between ages 8-12 would rather have regular playing time on a losing team than sit the bench on a winning team. What about being cut from a squad? How many kids never even try because of the practice of "cutting"? Most of the factors influencing being cut or playing are beyond the control of the student. Physical maturity, athletic skill, coaches judgments are few factors in the process of "cutting". At what age is it ok to tell a child he's not good enough to participate with others? What is the purpose of having little league select teams or the little league world series for that matter? To prove what to whom?

Sports programs are neither inherently good nor evil, but rather what parents and coaches make out of them. We know that children and young adolescents flourish when they feel safe. It is up to parents and coaches to provide this sense of security not an arena of competition. Well -balanced physical education which begins with smart parenting and good sports selection will help our young athletes learn the lessons that only sports have to teach.

Not sure about what you read or where you stand put yourself in this scenario:

Your 9 year-old child comes to you and says they want to be a mathematician "it's all I want to do." They excel in math will you stop all other forms of education so they can concentrate on math?

Playing different sports is physical education, each sport has its own set of physical, and psychological lessons it's suppose to teach.

Play for fun. Play for the Love of the sport. Play to win when it counts.

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