

Coaches that push kids to injury

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It is springtime again and to all of you sports players, that often means baseball and softball. As a public service, I am going to let you in on a secret that many of you are apparently not aware of. If you are out in the field throwing or running, and something hurts, it is time to stop.

Playing baseball or softball may be a seemingly easy thing. However, to your body, it is not. When you throw a baseball, you are not just using your arm. You are using your entire body. Force travels through your feet to the legs, hips, torso, and finally to the ball. Tremendous amounts of rotational forces are placed upon your shoulder and elbow.

As one sports physician puts it, "When you throw a ball, the resulting force is trying to pull your arm off of your body. It's like somebody is trying to dislocate your shoulder."

And this tendency is magnified in young players who are not fully mature. Kids are not little adults, as many coaches

would like to believe. They are more susceptible to such injuries as "Little League elbow," in which the elbow has been worn down through extreme repetition. When a pitcher cocks back with his arm to deliver, he/she is placing awesome stress on his elbow.

The key signal of the time to stop throwing is pain. This is not a signal of a good workout. Pain in the throwing arm of kids is not normal. And the culprit of all this pain and overwork is not what you might expect.

Coaches. To kids, they seem to be the last word, the fountain of knowledge. In reality, these coaches are usually volunteers, with no formal training and deficient knowledge in the field of sports injuries and their causes. They often think that pain is an indicator of a good workout and good effort, but in fact it is a signal of overwork. These coaches oftentimes mean well. I have, in my experience with baseball,

seen coaches tell kids to "walk it off" and get back in the game. Other times, I have seen coaches who believed that if you ac-

knowledged any sign of pain, then you are a weakling and a coward not to be tolerated.

They become so competitive and involved in winning that they lose sight of what is best for their players. This is where the real damage ensues. The kids are trained to suck it up and go out there and hustle even when they are hurting.

So, in the event that there may be a real problem, many kids are afraid to voice their pain at the risk of being ridi-

culed and shamed. It is through such conditioning that the career-ending injuries can occur.



A recent movie, "Varsity Blues," addresses this issue in full, straightforward detail. The coach of a high-school football

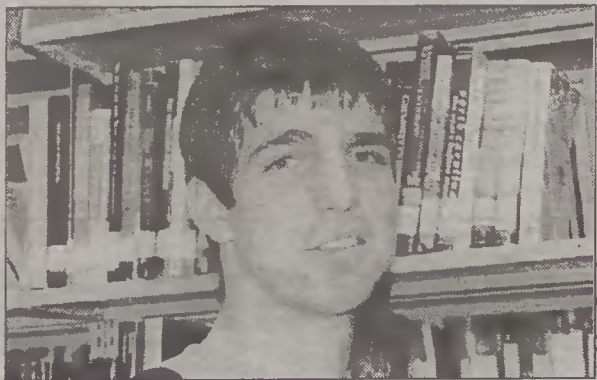
team pushes his players to the point of exhaustion. When one would become injured, they are given a shot so that they would not feel the pain. In one such instance, the team's star quarterback loses any chance he has of playing in college by getting his leg broken. When another player, who is an overweight lineman, passes out from lack of oxygen, he is shamed and ridiculed to the point of tears. These players have been conditioned all of their lives to be strong, silent, tough guys. When there is a problem, they kept it in.

This is not an unrealistic situation. It happens all of the time in towns all across America. Win-hungry coaches, backed by obsessive parents, push kids and young adults past their limits in pursuit of a championship or a big win. They lose sight of the reason kids play sports to begin with. They want to have fun and compete. Winning is only icing on the cake. When sports society reaches the extremes of you must win, or you are a failure, that is the ultimate corruption of sport.

What was the most useless thing you did or learned this year?

* "Watts Lawn"
- Alejandro Canup

* "Calculus"
- Andy Schlesing



Andy Schlesing

* "Everything has a purpose, you just have to wait for the right time to use it."
- Spam Engler

* "Sign-out procedures"
- Julia Tyson

* "Telling the truth is not always the best thing to do."
- Emma Hardison

* "How to correctly fill out an excused absence form."
- Jim Furgurson

* "The rules"
- Thomas Covington

* "8 o'clock check"
- Geoff Hill

* "No matter how hard you study for a Physic's test, you will always fail."
- Taymour Hammoudi



Jim Furgurson

* "Living in single-sex dorms"
-Pratik Patel

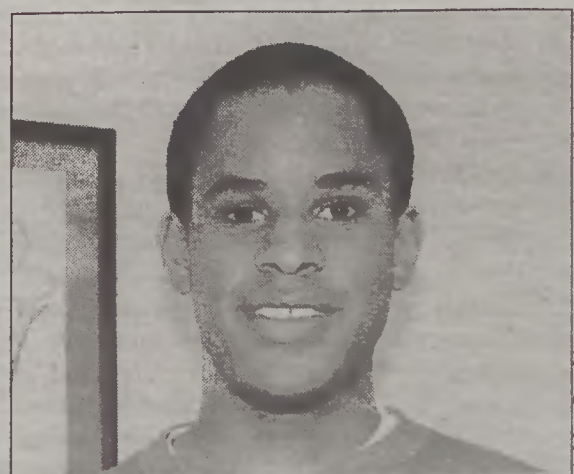
* "Applying to a school other than Carolina"
-Tommy Robbins

* "I-viz"
Alejandro Canup

* "Going to hall-meetings"
-Chris Paul

* "The 8 o'clock rule"
-Kenny Gibbs

* "If it was useless, why would I remember it?"
-Corey Hadley



Kenny Gibbs

Ashley Rankin

Ashley Rankin