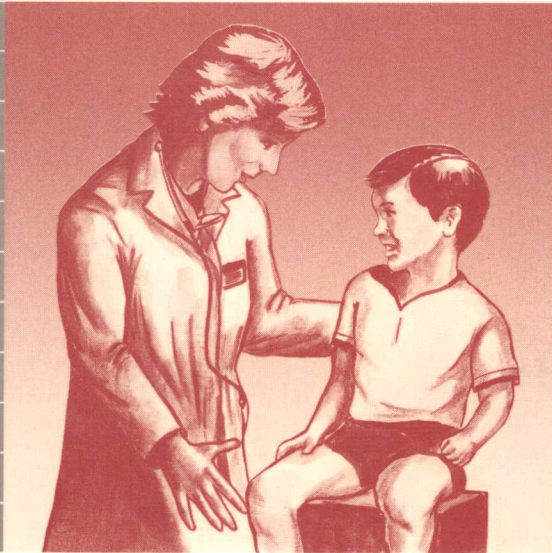


COMMON PROBLEMS IN PEDIATRIC SPORTS MEDICINE

Nathan J. Smith



NOT FOR RESALE

COMMON PROBLEMS IN

PEDIATRIC SPORTS MEDICINE

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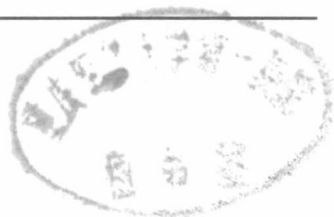
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FOREWORD

I have an 8-year-old grandson—a good athlete—but I vacillate between pushing him to excel further in athletics and worrying about early burnout. I have had several patients with epilepsy. Should they participate in sports? Which sports? What is the impact on young women of increasing participation in athletics? How can we prevent injuries among young athletes? What should athletes eat immediately before a game? And what training diets do different sports require?

As pediatricians, parents, grandparents, and citizens, we have had very few scientific answers to these types of questions in the past. The editor of this book is a pediatrician, a scientist, and above all, a wise person. He has invited an excellent group of authors to answer these and many other questions. They begin each chapter with a case history to which all readers can easily relate. They follow up with the information needed by the many people who deal with sports and youth.

It is only in recent years that sports medicine has become both a scientific and major new field for the pediatrician. Dr. Nathan J. Smith was one of the first to apply the sciences of physiology and nutrition to sports medicine. For the pediatrician, the chapters on sports participation and various specific chronic illnesses will be most helpful. But for lay readers as well as physicians, there is also much practical wisdom in the discussions about stress management in sports (including descriptions of specific relaxation exercises), and advice for parents for whom sports is only a television activity—that is, a spectator sport—but who want to live out their sports fantasies through their own children. Perhaps most important of all is the philosophy expressed in the book that winning is not everything in sports: what makes you a success in sports, as in life, is doing your best. It would help a great deal if parents, physicians, coaches, and the public realized that children are never losers if they give their maximum effort. This book will fill a real gap in the current pediatric literature,

but it will fill an even greater gap in its analysis of the cultural values that we attach to competitive sports in America today.

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PART ONE

Counselling Parents and Young Athletes

1 Sports and the Preadolescent: “Little League” Sports

A physician's family has moved to your community. The father has asked if you will see his four children, ages two to nine years, in your practice. There have been no serious health problems in the past, but the father would appreciate some advice regarding a current concern of the family.

The oldest son, age nine, has recently joined a community youth soccer program. This is the family's first experience with youth sports, and both the mother and father are disturbed by much of the behavior of parents both at games and at practices. Their son is not the “star” of the team but plays quite well and has played during most of the game time. There are others who play less well that seldom get into the game.

A problem arose recently when the family went to the mountains for a weekend, and the son missed a scheduled game. As a result, and in accordance with previously formulated team rules, the coach levied a penalty requiring their child to spend most of the next game on the sidelines. Early evening practice sessions are eliminating the family dinner hour two nights a week, and the mother is losing her enthusiasm for transporting soccer players to games on weekends when her husband has to be “on call.” She knows that there are three other children who must also have a bit of attention. The father has some concerns that are real. “I want my children to enjoy sports, but I don't think this program is teaching my son that sports can be fun. Sports are important for me, and I hope they will be for my children.”

“How do these programs fit in with family life? We have three more that could be involved in a very few years. How can we begin to make youth sports a positive experience for our family?”

Recommendation by Frank L. Smoll, Ph.D.

DISCUSSION

Although children have always engaged in play, the past half century has witnessed the development of increasingly organized youth sports programs. Organized youth sports in the United States actually go back to the early 1900s. The first programs were instituted in public schools when it was recognized that physical activity was an important part of education. Over time, sponsor-