

Teach Sportsmanship...to Parents

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Team Spotlight



September 2011

# The Name of the Game

*“The spirit, the will to win, and the will to excel are the things that endure. These qualities are so much more important than the events that occur.”*

**Vince Lombardi**

## Teaching Sportsmanship...to Parents

We remind our children frequently to be a good sport, and have them shake hands with the opposing team. But somewhere along the way these basic principles have stopped applying to all parents. Too many of us have gone to watch a youth baseball or soccer game and come across spectators who behave inappropriately. We've also all read stories where this behavior has turned into violence. These parents are so wrapped up in winning or how well their own kids perform that they lose perspective. They forget that the goals of organized sports are teaching our children good sportsmanship and building character, while they are having fun.

Playing on an organized sports team should teach children that they need to attend practice consistently, listen attentively to the coach, stick to the rules of the game, and be supportive teammates. And, while it's important to want to win, it's also important to learn to lose gracefully. It may be difficult for our children to learn to control their emotions in the face of defeat, but it's an important skill to learn.

This lesson only gets harder when our kids see us reacting

poorly on the sidelines. If we can keep control of our own passion and disappointment, we can model good sportsmanship. Set a good example by congratulating parents of kids on the opposing team when their kids win. Keep comments positive. Don't bad-mouth coaches, players, or game officials. If you have a serious concern about the team, or if you're upset about other parents' behavior, discuss it privately with the coach. And, applaud good plays no matter who makes them. Look for examples of good sportsmanship in professional athletes and point them out to your kids. Talk about the bad examples too, and why they upset you.

Kids who see adults modeling good sportsmanship gradually come to understand that the real winners in sports are those who know how to persevere and to behave with dignity, work hard to achieve goals, and build lasting relationships. As parents, we need to emphasize winning as just one of several goals for our kids to achieve. We should encourage our kids to play fair, to have fun, and to concentrate on being part of the team. But above all, we should demonstrate these behaviors ourselves.

## Burnout vs. Sticking it Out

Many children have a variety of interests growing up and they will often try out different activities and sports until they find one that is right for them, which is sometimes influenced by peers. But as a child becomes more committed to a sport, there comes a greater standard for which children are expected to perform, which can lead to big time commitments for families as well as added stress on the child to excel at a high level. Sometimes it can be difficult for parents to understand the pressures children face in sports that require a high level of time and dedication. On the other hand, there are some instances where children are pushed to stay with an activity that they may grow out of or no longer enjoy. Both can be stressful on kids and make it difficult to find joy in something that was once fun for them.

Beginning as a young child I tried out a variety of sports and art activities that, for the most part, I did not stick with. I was learning what excited and challenged me, and what I found boring or didn't develop a passion for. Everything from painting and music to gymnastics, softball and volleyball to dance, cheerleading, and tennis was part of my repertoire; some I stuck with and some I did not. In particular, as a small child I was put into dance classes. As a free spirited child, I did not appreciate the etiquette required of ballet, nor did I particularly enjoy the demand it began to require of me physically, despite my natural talent and facility for dance. At first I was encouraged to stick with it and further develop the gifts I had, but I soon came to dislike practicing to the point that I burnt out and decided to choose another sport. I chose cheerleading. Like many pre-teen girls, I felt this was the ideal activity. In the beginning I had many friends who cheered as well. I enjoyed the social aspect in addition to the physical challenges it presented. However, every year the number of good friends I cheered with slowly tapered off until I was eventually the only one of my close-knit friends that participated. I remember it being the day before try-outs at the end of 8th grade that I told my mother that I couldn't go because I was "sick". I enjoyed cheerleading and I was talented, but when it became no longer "cool", I wanted to quit. I ended up trying-out that year, as I did for the rest of my high school career, ultimately becoming team captain my senior year. To this day I'm thankful for my mom's encouragement to stick it out, despite it not being the "popular" choice among my peers.

In addition to sticking with cheerleading, I eventually found my way back to dance. I'm not sure what in me found this sudden urge to continue dancing, but I think I

realized I missed it, and I had this feeling deep inside me where I knew I was meant to dance. I haven't looked back since, and although my cheerleading days have ended, I still dance to this day with every bit of fervor that I had as an adolescent. Sometimes I get upset that I was allowed to stop, as returning later on proved to be extremely challenging physically and mentally. But, I soon become thankful my parents did not cross the boundary from encouraging to pushy. I believe I would have come to resent dancing if I was forced to stick with it at the time where I no longer found it enjoyable. I was able to find my passion for dancing within myself rather than being *expected* to have a passion for it. As I matured into a young adult, I learned to value the discipline that comes with ballet in addition to the self-expression, confidence, and character it fosters. Additionally, ballet comes with pressure to expect your body to perform at an extremely high caliber and study multiple hours each day, which not only taught me good work ethic, but raised me to believe that I am always as good as the best thing I have ever done. On days I felt defeated or overworked, this was always the first thing I told myself. One way I was, and still am, able to balance the demands required of me in the studio is to keep ballet *in the studio*. Home is where I focus on family, relaxing, and having fun (this is helpful for school and work as well). By keeping dance outside of home, I am able to prevent burnout and better focus during the times I do practice (and I practice a lot!).

Today, I find it difficult to quit anything I start despite the challenges it may present. At the same time, I do not allow myself to feel guilty for not taking part in commitments that I do not find joy in. This allows me to be committed and excel in aspects of my life that are the most important and rewarding, rather than stretch myself thin in so many areas that I would never be able to learn and grow. I credit my parents for instilling perseverance in me (even when what I do is not the popular choice), and I credit myself for learning to follow my heart and seek meaningful opportunities that I can develop passions for and that will continue to enrich my life. Additionally, having been involved in high pressure activities, I was able to learn healthy ways to cope with stress, while learning to never accept anything less than my best. One day, when I have children of my own, I hope to take the same approach. Listening to your child and knowing your child will allow you to better guide them in a direction that will prevent them from being discouraged or burnt out, and allow them to be successful in whatever they choose pursue.

-Kelli Coon, Family Care Coordinator

## Overuse Injuries

### Overuse injuries

*"I don't know why I go to extremes." Billy Joel*

If you have (or if you are) a young athlete, you need to know about overuse injuries. In this article, we will try to explain what they are, why they happen, how you can recognize them, and finally what you can do to prevent or treat them.

### WHAT THEY ARE

At the risk of being "master of the obvious", overuse injuries are conditions that result subtly to bones, muscles, or tendons that have been used "too much." On a more scientific level, micro-traumatic damage happens to these structures because they have experienced repetitive stress without adequate time to heal or let the body repair.

As a category, overuse injuries are probably the most common cause of youth sports injuries. And even more concerning, the typical age that they occur is getting younger and younger.

### WHY THEY HAPPEN

As before, much can be understood about why these happen by looking at the name -- i.e. "overuse." Though they can occur at any age, pediatric patients more susceptible to these injuries due to the fact that the structures affected are still developing. Additionally, technique is frequently incorrect, perhaps compounding the trauma; however, even with proper technique, the primary factor is simply too much use.

More than ever before, many children are participating in sports year-round, often even on multiple teams simultaneously. The rise in overuse injuries has paralleled this trend in year-round youth sports.

The other common scenario where these injuries occur is in the first 3-4 weeks of practice/training. When players do "too much, too soon, too fast", they are at high risk for these type of injuries.

### HOW TO RECOGNIZE THEM

Like a good detective, the key to recognizing overuse injuries is knowing what you are looking for and how they typically "behave".

Each sport tends to have it's own associated medical concerns. In fact, the names by which these conditions are commonly known reveal their typical associated sport. Jumper's knee, little league elbow, gymnast's back are all descriptive terms to describe some of the more common overuse injuries.

Overuse injuries typically follow a progression of four stages:

1. Pain experienced after exercising
2. Pain experienced during exercising but not limiting performance
3. Pain experienced during exercising and interfering with maximum performance

**Flu Vaccines**

Middleton Pediatrics is now offering Flu vaccines. Flu shots are recommended for all of our patients and families to protect against the Influenza virus, and are offered to ages 6 months and older. We also offer FluMist, a non-shot version of the Flu vaccine, which is for children and adults ages 2-49. Please call our office at 407.284.6460 to schedule your Flu vaccination.

For more information on the Flu shot or FluMist, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/>

4. Chronic, unremitting pain, experienced even at rest

Parents, coaches, physicians, and even the athletes themselves should be vigilant in watching for the early signs of the overuse injury to which the athlete is especially vulnerable.

### WHAT TO DO

Addressing overuse injuries involves both treatment once they occur and, even better, preventing them from occurring in the first place. Each shares some common elements. First, treatment...

The treatment of overuse injuries is straightforward and essentially consists of rest. There may be other measures such as specific stretching exercises, anti-inflammatory medications, and various orthotics (depending on the injury), yet these are all a distant second to the primary prescription for rest. However, carrying out this straightforward therapeutic plan is often quite difficult. The reason for this difficulty gets at one of the core issues that needs to be mentioned regarding overuse injuries. Adults - parents and coaches - are one of the main contributing factors to the development of these conditions. Young athletes, and especially young athletes who show great promise in their chosen sport, are pressured to "play through" the symptoms of overuse injuries, thus perpetuating and worsening the problem.

Preventing overuse injuries is accomplished by allowing the body and its stressed structures time to rest. Ways this can be accomplished include:

Encouraging participation in multiple sports before puberty, when feasible. This "cross-training" allows different structures to be rested.

During a sport's season, the athlete should have at least one day off each week, ideally two.

The athlete playing a sport "year round" should have 2-3 months off of that sport each year.

### A "HEALTHY" PERSPECTIVE

Sports can be a wonderful part of our children's lives. Injuries can prevent young athletes from experiencing many of the benefits sports offer. Some of these injuries are unavoidable; overuse injuries are not. Help your young athlete get the most out of sports by making sure they don't get sidelined by "too much".

## Team Spotlight: Adair Middleton



Hometown: Orlando

Children: Connor (14), Luke (11), Drew (8), Ansley Allen (3)

Favorite Vacation Destination: The Bahamas, Kamalame Cay—or any- place Michael is!

Favorite Dessert: Chocolate is my favorite food group

Life Motto: Colossians 3:23 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord."

Favorite Holiday: Christmas!!

Hobbies: Snow skiing, snorkeling, tennis, daily raising Connor, Luke, Drew, and AA!

Favorite Book: Land Remembered by Patrick Smith

Favorite Restaurant: Houston's, Brio, The Bull & The Bear/Waldorf Astoria Orlando

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