



## Troubling Signals from Youth Sports

### **The number of kids in organized youth sports**

- 30-40 million kids playing organized sports each year<sup>1</sup>
- 2-4 Million coaches – less than 20% have received any type of training!<sup>2</sup>
- 85% of these coaches are dads coaching their own children<sup>3</sup>
- 80% of the kids are in non-school programs
- 20% in school programs

Participation in non-school programs, i.e. clubs has increased  
Participation in school programs has decreased

### **What the Kids are saying about abuse**

- 45.3 percent of kids surveyed said they had been called names, yelled at, or insulted by coaches.
- 21 percent said they had been pressured to play with an injury.
- 17.5 percent said they had been hit, kicked, or slapped.
- 8 percent said they had been called names with sexual connotations.
- 3.4 percent said they had been sexually abused. This final number is very conservative because not many will admit it.

Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission 1993

### **Why they Quit**

The Youth Sports Institute at Michigan State, in a survey of 10,000 kids nation-wide, listed the top ten reasons why kids quit organized youth sports:

1. They lost interest
2. They were not having fun
3. It required too much time
4. The coach played favorites
5. The coach was a poor teacher
6. They got tired of playing
7. Too much emphasis on winning
8. They wanted to participate in other non-sport activities
9. They needed more time to study
10. There was too much pressure

Another study conducted and presented in a paper to the American Alliance for Health surveyed 1,183 athletes ages 11-14.

- 35% said they planned to stop playing the next year.
- The same researchers surveyed the parents of 418 athletes aged 6-10, and 50% of those parents said their child was not interested in the sport any more and would stop playing.
- Other studies conclude that as many as 70% - 80% of the kids who begin playing a sport at an early age have dropped out by age 15!<sup>4</sup>

## **Why they participate**

1990 Athletic Footwear Association Survey of over 20,000 kids nation-wide asked, “Why they participate in sports.”

1. To have fun
2. To improve their skills
3. To stay in shape
4. To do something they are good at
5. The excitement of the competition
6. To get exercise
7. To play as part of a team
8. The challenge of the competition
9. To learn new skills
10. To win

- Over 65% said they participate in sports to be with friends.
- 15% were reluctant to participate
- Only 20% want to improve their skills
- Winning was LAST.

A UCLA Sports Psychology Lab survey found the same results.

USA Today and NBC Poll in 1990, published in USA Today September 9, 1990 found that:

- 71% of the kids surveyed said they wouldn't care if no score were kept in their games.
- 37% said they wished that no parents would watch them play
- 41% said they have awakened in the night worrying about an upcoming game
- 51% said that they see other kids act like poor sports frequently

Another Study on Children in Sports found that:

- 95% would rather have fun than worry about winning
- 90% said they would prefer to be on a losing team if they were able to actually play rather than warm the bench on a winning team.

## What the Numbers say about Scholarships and pro contracts

Of the 20-30 million kids playing youth sports, 1 in 4 youth stars become stars in H.S.

### Soccer:

- 284,000 H.S. boys playing Soccer – 8,000 (3%) are playing in Div. I & II schools  
There are only 3,306 full scholarships available.
- 209,000 H.S. girls playing Soccer – 7,000 (3.3%) are playing in Div. I & II schools  
There are only 3,479 full scholarships available.

### Football:

- 1 Million boys play H.S. Football - 41,000 play in Div. I – II schools 3.8%  
17,000 in Division I-A and 24,000 in Division II
- Only 150 make it to the NFL - .00015 %

### Basketball:

- 1 Million boys and girls playing H.S. Basketball - only 17,000 (1.7%) make it to Div. I and II schools.
- 500,000 Boys playing H.S. Basketball - only 50 make it to NBA - .0001 %

**The Odds are 6,000 to 1 for a H.S. football player to make it to the NFL**  
**The Odds are 10,000 to 1 for a H.S. basketball player to make it to the NBA**

### Hockey:

According to recent reports, there were 600,000 registered players in the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association.

- 53% were under 12 years of age
- 35% were between 12-15 years of age
- 11% were over 15 years of age  
**i.e. only 1 out of 10 kids in Canada was still playing hockey at 15 years of age**

Of 30,000 boys born in Ontario in 1975 that played organized hockey only .0004% made it to the NHL.

- By the time they were Bantam age, 22,000 were still playing.
- Junior Clubs drafted 232 and of these, 105 never played a single game.
- 90 finished junior hockey, and
- 23 went on to college hockey.
- 48 of that total were drafted by the NHL in 1993, and two others signed as free agents.
- 38 ended up with contracts, and
- 22 of the original 30,000 played at least one game in the NHL.
- At age 24, 11 were still in the NHL. That's about .0004%

## The Ultimate Goal:

Average Salaries of professional athletes for 2002:

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| MLB    | \$2.3 million annually - up 5.2% from 2001 |
| NBA    | \$4.2 million annually                     |
| Hockey | \$1.4 million annually                     |
| NFL    | \$1.1 million annually                     |

\* The Arizona Republic April 3, 2001

Cost to take a family of 4 to:

|          |          |
|----------|----------|
| MLB game | \$114.82 |
| NBA game | \$214.00 |
| NHL game | \$230.00 |

## Annual Costs of supporting a child on competitive (elite, all-star) teams:

Travel Hockey:

Prep School – Exeter Academy \$22,000/year for board and room; Culver Academy \$25,000/year for board and room.

Two week summer camp at Exeter \$1,150

Cost of travel hockey for one season:

\$600 – \$1,500 basic membership per year  
\$800 for skates, sticks, helmets, pads, and gloves  
Travel: airfare, hotels, food \$5,000 - \$10,000 just for one player. Parents often travel with their children!

It can cost as much as \$10,000 for one child to play a year of travel hockey. Multiply that by 7 years of travel hockey = \$70,000.....more than enough for tuition, board and room at Stanford, MIT, Harvard, or any Ivy League school for two full years. !!!!!

**Ironically, 59% of parents rate the concept of all-stars or select teams as “fair” to terrible.**

## Coaches

2-4 Million coaches

- Less than 20% have received any type of training!

In a USA Today national survey:

19% were rated as being “excellent”

55% were rated as being only “good”

22% were rated as being “fair”

3% were rated as being “poor”

That means, according to this survey, that one of every four youth coaches is less than good as seen by parents. More than half were only seen as “good.” That’s not particularly encouraging.

## The Fundamental Questions Parents Must Answer

1. What are your goals for your child’s participation in sports?
2. What are your expectations for family life?
3. What will be the impact on the rest of the family?
4. What are the anticipated costs in \$?
5. What are the anticipated costs in time spent per week? (3 practices @ 3.5 hrs total per practice including drive time = 10.5 hrs/weekly average - plus drive/travel time and playing time for 60 game/season.)

The ultimate question: Is (was) it all worth it?

## Conclusions:

These statistics all indicate that our system of youth sports in this country is not doing what everyone thinks. Clearly, it is not serving the needs of our children and their families. These statistics dramatically expose the myths about sports being fun for all, educational, character building, providing a foundation for life-long exercise and physical activity, fostering teamwork, and promoting self-confidence.

Our system of organizing youth sports is broken, dysfunctional, and serving the needs of only a minute number of athletes and families.

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<sup>1</sup> Gould, D., and Weiss, M. (eds) *Advances in Pediatric Sport Sciences*, Vol.2: Behavioral Issues (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 1987) pp. 55 ff. cfr also Weinberg, R.S., and Gould, D., “*Children’s Psychological Development Through Sport*,” in J. Silva and R. Weinberg (eds) *Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 1987) pp 449-466. Also, Gerdy, John. Editor. (2000) *Sports in School: The Future of an Institution*. NY: Teacher’s College Press, Columbia University. P. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Gerdy, John. Editor. (2000) *Sports in School: The Future of an Institution*. NY: Teacher’s College Press, Columbia University. P. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Engh, Fred. (1999) *Why Johnny Hates Sports*. NY: Avery. P. 73

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 3. cfr. also USA Today, September 9, 1990.