

Family Time

A magazine for Lake County parents

August 2002 Number 12

FREE

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New School Year**

Brainy Talkers:

How Children Learn Language

**Youth Football:
Pass or Play?**

Is Your Child Really ADHD?

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Pass Or Play?

Experts Say Fear Of Youth Football Unwarranted

by Suzanne Brazil

My daughter Emily's soccer game was in full swing when I casually mentioned to one of the team moms that my 7-year-old son, Jeremy, would be starting football soon. The mom's adamant response was the first of many I would receive. "That's the one thing my husband and I agreed on right away. Definitely NO FOOTBALL for our kids," she decreed. "They're just so little... I want to wait till they're older for football," was a common refrain. I began to wonder if I was underestimating the danger involved. Would I be acting irresponsibly to enroll my child in this program? Why are some parents so against this sport? The answers to these questions seem to be a lack of information and fear of injury. Take that fear and add a layer of news coverage featuring stories of asthma-induced deaths to local high school players, along with stories of paralysis, and you have the makings for some skittish sport parents.

Injuries Are Rare

Enter Coach Currier. Mike Currier has been involved in football for most of his life. He played in junior high for several years, coached flag football in the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio and currently serves as Commissioner of the Varsity League of the Libertyville Boys Club Youth Football program. He has coached in the junior varsity league there for seven years. He has coached kids with "broken arms, a sprained back, concussions, etc. and all of it from recess." He has never had a player lose practice or game time as a result of an injury on the football field. That's just one coach, though. What about nationally? Well, according to Michael J. Stuard, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon at MAYO and the principal author of a MAYO Clinic study released in April of this year, "Our analysis showed that youth football injuries are uncommon." The study also indicated that the risk of injury in youth football does not appear greater than the risk associated with other recreational or competitive sports. The U.S. Government found the same thing to be true when it compiled injury

statistics through the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System. Both basketball and bike riding caused more visits to the emergency room in the 5 to 14 age group than did football. Still, as one mom put it, "The purpose of football is to have them knock each other down," and injuries will happen in any sport. So how does a responsible parent decide whether or not football is for them and if so, how do they choose a good program?

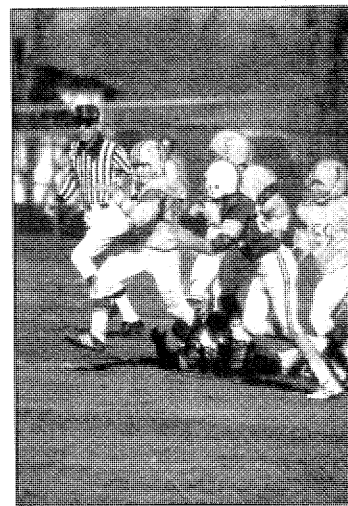
Organize That Energy

Chris Martin, President and Owner of on-the-go SPORTS Inc. and former Chicago Bear Football Player, has dedicated much of his time to instructing children and adults in the basics and fundamentals of football. As a youth in Tampa, Florida, Chris "was born with a football in hand." Both of his brothers played as youths and his father was involved with coaching as well.

"To tell you the truth, they were always running around and being rowdy. So, I loaded them in the car and drove around and at the third park we ran into the Vikings Football organization. They hadn't reached their quota and so I signed them up. They had too much energy," said James Martin. He agrees with his son Chris that getting kids started early and in a good program is key to getting the most out of the sport. Conditioning and safety-conscious programs depend on good coaches and coaches who know the game.

Good Habits Prevent Injury

The payoff for participation in a well-structured program is life lessons that "transcend the field," says Chris Martin. "Getting knocked down and getting back up, being resilient, team oriented and setting goals. Things people have to do every day. It requires discipline, knowing where you fit... kind of like a puzzle." So is this what young kids need? According to Martin who offers non-contact



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football camps through many area park districts, "Pressure is what you feel when you're not prepared. Parents feel apprehensive because their kids are not prepared." Starting younger instills good habits in players and good habits are one of the essential components of injury prevention.

Another important aspect is rules and equipment. The Libertyville Boys Club follows a strict safety code that specifies what shoes, pads and other equipment are necessary for play. According to Coach Currier, players are not allowed on the field without mouthguards in place and they use helmets that are inspected and certified according to national standards every year.

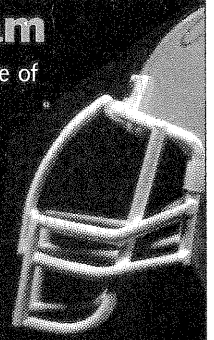
Elements of a Good Program

Both Coach Currier and Chris Martin agree that there is no substitute for qualified coaching and parental support in ensuring that kids get the most out of a football program. The LBC coaches are governed by a committee called the Coaches Counsel which consists of one board member and four other coaches. Should there be any complaints from parents or staff regarding the coaching methods or playing style of a certain team or coach, the coach is called before the counsel and will either be cleared of the charges or reprimanded by the counsel including yardage penalties, game suspensions and/or removal from the league. There is also a seven person board that oversees the entire operation headed by League Commissioner, John Teichman. Martin's coaching staff at on-the-go SPORTS Inc. is made up of instructors who have playing experience at the college level or above. "Parents should look at the coaches working with their kids and ask about their knowledge and skill level." suggests Martin. Both Currier and Martin agree that the coaches need to be

Find a Quality Program

To locate a program in your area, contact one of the following organizations:

- American Youth Football, Inc.: www.youthsportsusa.com
- Boys & Girls Clubs of America: www.bgca.org
- YMCA of the USA: www.ymca.net
- Jewish Community Centers Association: www.jcca.org
- on-the-go SPORTS, Inc.: 847-337-1116 or otgsportsinc@hotmail.com
- Your local Park District Office



Qualities To Look For In A Program:

- Safety rules documented
- Safety equipment inspected and certified
- Encourages parental involvement
- Physical conditioning emphasized
- Coaches educated and well-trained

there for the kids and be able to listen and form a bond. "The goal is to make it a positive experience for the kid," says Currier.

The MAYO study did show that the risk of injury to kids actually increased as the level of play increases. "Older players in the higher grades are more susceptible to football injuries. Potential contributing factors include increased size, strength, speed and

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Getting Kids "Wild" About Writing

(NAPSI) A child's education begins at home, as parents create a foundation for the learning process through their own words and actions. Although many parents recognize the importance of reading to their children, few realize they can help kids develop another skill – writing.

In addition to its practical uses, writing has important social and therapeutic implications. Whether you're writing a thank-you note or letter to a friend, expressing feelings in a journal entry, or jotting down a grocery list, organizing your thoughts on paper is a part of everyone's day-to-day activities in some way or another.

Encouraging children to write about the activities they enjoy is a great way to develop their writing skills. By recording thoughts about a visit to the zoo, a nature hike, or backyard explorations with friends, kids can have fun while learning at the same time.

Paper Mate has recently teamed up with Animal Planet and Jeff Corwin of The Jeff Corwin Experience to launch "Wild About Writing," a national essay program for kids. By watching their favorite wildlife adventure on Animal Planet and submitting a brief handwritten essay about what they saw, kids ages six to 15 can win a chance to appear on Animal Planet in 2003. One lucky student will be randomly selected from eligible essays received by October 7, 2002.

"We want to encourage kids to explore the world around them, stretch their imagination and express themselves through writing," said Corwin. "The world is full of fascinating creatures, and kids can learn a great deal by observing and recording the behaviors of their favorite wild animals."

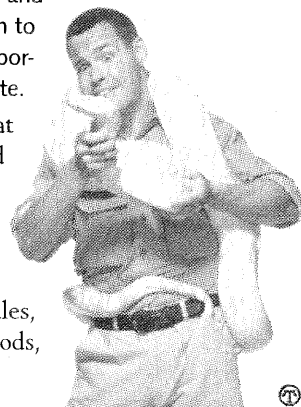
To help get the creative juices flowing, parents can help kids jump-start the writing process:

1. Encourage keeping a journal. As your children observe and explore the world around them, encourage them to write about things they see and what interests them.

2. Make writing fun with "cool tools." Use fun writing instruments like animal-print pencils and neon-colored pens to get your creative juices flowing. Keep notebooks with colored paper around for additional inspiration.

3. Write together. Have your child help you with everyday writing tasks, such as letter writing and thank-you notes. This helps children to see firsthand that writing is an important and useful way to communicate.

You may be surprised at what develops the next time your child puts words on paper. And, their next essay may lead to an appearance on Animal Planet. For information on Wild About Writing and complete program rules, including alternative entry methods, visit www.papermate.com. ✕



The Art Of Oral Storytelling

by Joyce Mesrobian, M.Ed.

Once upon a time, storytelling was an accepted mode of entertaining and educating people, young and old. Then, in the 18th and 19th centuries, the popular view of storytelling shifted, and it became a pastime for children only. Now it is experiencing a revival. Across the country – in schools, parks libraries and festivals – people are rediscovering this vibrant and wonderful form of communication.

Storytelling is an oral art form. The art occurs during the presentation. No two storytellers present their art in exactly the same way. Each learns his story well and then, as he tells his tale, accepts the responses from the audience and orchestrates them into the changing fabric of his presentation. The audience, in turn, experiences a "telling" and adapts and changes the images according to its own interpretations. Therefore, an oral story becomes a mutual creation between the teller and the audience, arising from the active imagination of everyone involved.

The primary purpose of storytelling is to stimulate creative imagination. Imagination is the capacity to make connections between the visible and invisible, between the past and present, and between the present and the future. Children (or adults) who cannot make these connections live in a confining world. However, through creative storytelling, children do move magically beyond the present and the visible into the heightened sense of wonder and mystery of an expanding universe.

In addition to stimulating creative imagination, storytelling helps young children to improve their oral language and listening skills. In our eye-minded society, where young children are glued to TV sets and videos, the power of the spoken word is diminished, reducing language to everyday speech. But, in storytelling, the magical power of the spoken word, introduces young children to the charms and subtle nuances of word sounds and to the ebb and flow of rhythmical prose.

Creative storytelling, enhanced by puppets, stuffed animals and facial and bodily gestures brings magic, mystery, joy and delight to young listeners. Indeed, it is this delight from successful "tellings" that helps young children make strong connections between stories and pleasure, that will eventually lead to a love of storybooks and a life-long love of reading. ✕

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aggressiveness." If you're a mom thinking about your second grader being injured, the experts agree your fears are probably unwarranted. Choose a good program, observe practices and follow the lead of your child. If they're enjoying themselves, football can be a positive experience for them. Mattie Martin, mother of Chris Martin and three other grown children who grew up playing football, says she "never really thought about the danger" to her son in the NFL despite his smaller size. "It was something he loved so much and brought so much joy to him, it made me happy," she says.

My son did finish his first year in football as a second grader in the Libertyville Boys Club league. After his first week of practice, he came home with my husband and he was on crutches with a bandage around his ankle. "Oh no...what happened?" I cried.

"He was horsing around with some boys before practice and rolled down the hill backward," my husband replied. After x-rays and a week of attention-getting crutches at school he was back on the field and finished the entire season without a single on-field injury. They also won the championship that year! ✕

Suzanne Brazil is a freelance writer living in Vernon Hills with her husband, Tim, and children Emily and Jeremy. She can be reached at suebrazil@juno.com.