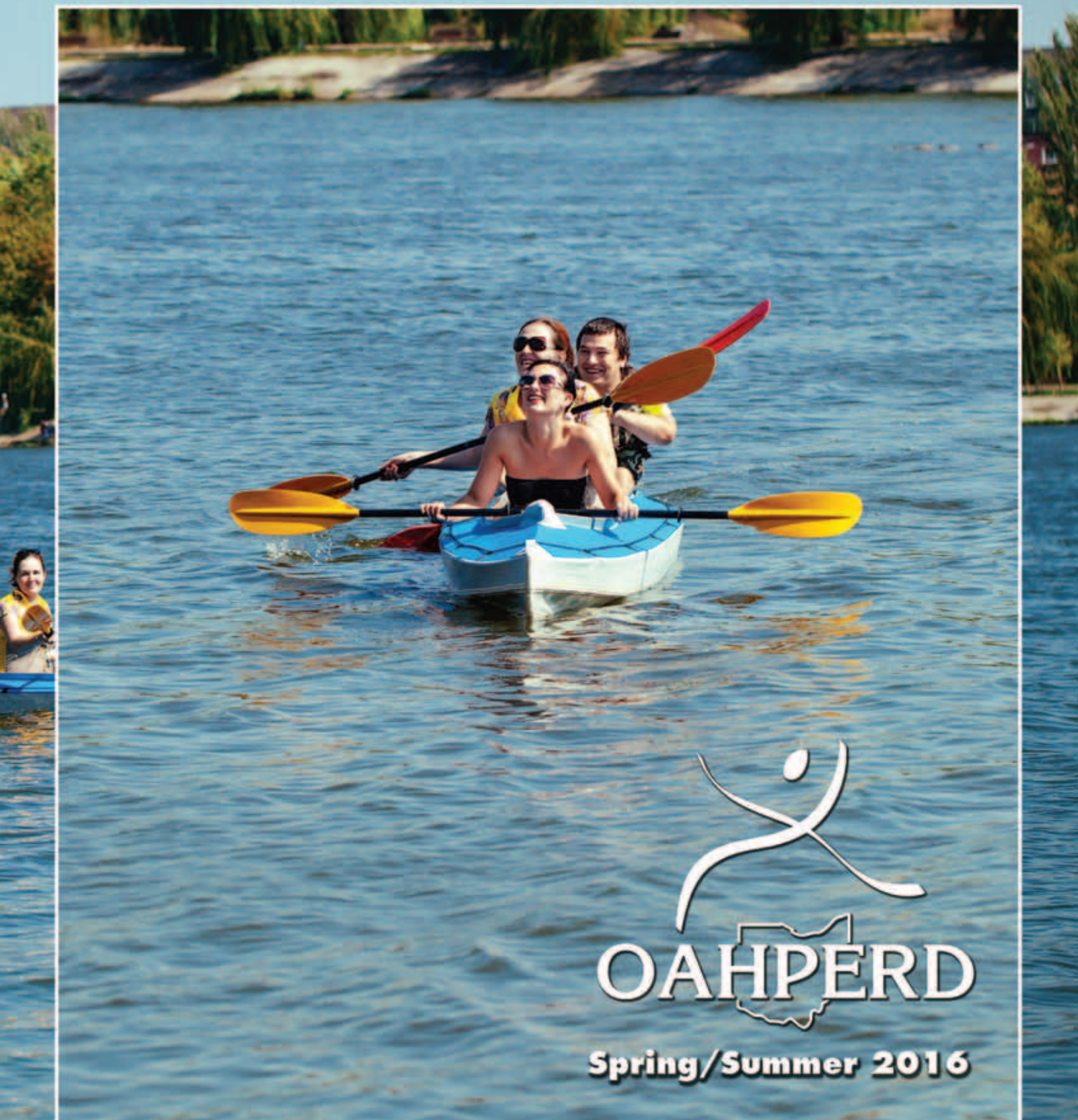


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Ohio Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance



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Spring/Summer 2016

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President's Message

Kevin Lorson, Wright State University

The "Shape" of Ohio – Spring 2016

It has been an honor to serve as OAHPERD President for the past four months. It is an exciting and sometimes daunting task to lead an organization that has been a big part of my life. As we "Keep Moving," the release of the 2016 *SHAPE of the Nation Report* prompted the need to keep the membership up-to-date on the current "shape" of OAHPERD.

SHAPE America recently released the 2016 *Shape of the Nation Report*. This report provides useful information for policy advocates, media and public health professionals to promote and improve physical education and physical activity in schools. The report provides encouraging details about how far we have progressed in our state and national advocacy goals and where to target our future advocacy efforts. A clear trend in the Shape of the Nation Report is that in every state, efforts are underway to promote effective, evidence-based physical education and to improve students' physical activity habits and overall health. I encourage everyone to review Ohio's summary for use in your local advocacy efforts. Ohio stands out because of our state's physical education assessments and the required reporting to the Ohio Department of Education, the revision of our standards, and the license requirements for physical education teachers. It also highlights our areas to improve, including: removing waivers for the 0.5 credit physical education graduation requirement, increasing participation in physical education during the school week and engaging students in physical activity throughout the school day.

Advocacy Update

OAHPERD has been busy "shaping" Ohio through our various advocacy efforts this year. Led by Steve Mitchell and the Advocacy Committee, OAHPERD is targeting two main issues: creating Ohio's health education standards and eliminating the high school physical education waiver.

We seem to receive disheartening news on a daily basis about the impact of current health issues on our local communities across the state. High rates of infant mortality and obesity and the rapid expansion of the opioid abuse epidemic are examples of the pressing need for effective health education



in schools. OAHPERD is moving ahead with plans to seek legislation that will ultimately create Health Education Standards for Ohio. The path to standards would include removal of General Assembly oversight, creation of a Health Education Consultant at the Ohio Department of Education, and creation of State Board of Education approved Health Education Standards. Now is the time for Ohio to provide teachers and school districts with the tools to deliver an effective standards-based health education curriculum.

OAHPERD is also moving ahead with plans to seek legislation to remove the high school physical education substitution waiver. We know the waiver has no solid educational foundation, since schools can now use Credit Flexibility as a tool to accommodating students' scheduling constraints.

We are hopeful to keep both of these issues on the front burner for the General Assembly. When the time is appropriate we will need our membership to step forward to advocate for these issues with their local lawmakers.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will also "shape" Ohio and OAHPERD. ESSA is comprehensive federal education legislation that basically replaces No Child Left Behind. ESSA does many things, but one of the improvements will be the inclusion of health and physical education as part of a well-rounded education. This will open up opportunities for Title I and II funds to be used for health and physical education. Title IV funding is also available to schools to implement a well-rounded education, safe and healthy schools, and effective use of technology. The details of how these funds will be distributed and used is currently being determined by each state. OAHPERD is working with other professional education organizations and the Ohio Department of Education to ensure these funds are used to benefit the health of Ohio's children. ESSA prioritizes the education of the whole child and the overall health of students; thus, OAHPERD's presence will be key to providing resources to teachers and school personnel. With any piece of legislation or policy we must be active. OAHPERD

will advocate at the state level while each member must be an advocate for his/her program and share with the local community and state representatives how the program can contribute to well-rounded, physically active and healthy students.

Convention & Convention Proposals

We are currently planning the 2016 Convention and I encourage you to find a way to contribute. Many members think the only way to contribute at convention is as a presenter, but other opportunities exist to share your expertise. If you have an idea for a presentation, but are unsure of developing the abstract or materials, seek out help from a peer or share your idea with OAHPERD leadership and we will find a presenter for your topic. You can also help make the convention a success by encouraging your co-workers and administrators to attend. We will again provide complimentary convention registration to two administrators for each district at the 2016 Convention.

As we all sprint to the finish line of our school year, look to “shape” your contribution to a healthier Ohio. Seek opportunities to “Do something and share something.” We continue to see news stories, and the media continues to talk, about the importance of health, physical activity, physical education and the overall well-being of our students, but rarely does the media talk to us about what we have done and our future plans to “shape” Ohio. We are doing great things individually and as an organization, but I encourage you to tell others what we are doing for a healthier and physically active Ohio via social networking, local media and at OAHPERD events.

Reference

SHAPE America. (2016). *2016 Shape of the nation report: Status of physical education in the USA*. Reston, VA: Author.

Association News

Lisa Kirr, OAHPERD Executive Director



It has been an exciting three months since joining the Ohio Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance as Executive Director. I appreciate being so warmly embraced by the Board of Directors and members. OAHPERD is a wonderful organization full of spirited, passionate members and I am glad to be a part of it.

In April I was able to attend the SHAPE America National Convention in Minneapolis. I left Minnesota full of ideas for our own convention in December and met many repeat and prospective exhibitors. I enjoyed networking with other Executive Directors and finding out what other states are up to.

The 2016 convention planning is right on schedule. We have received numerous proposals covering all aspects of health and physical education. Our Keynote Speaker will be Sandra Sims from The University of Alabama at Birmingham. I think you will find that her philosophy of “Finding Joy in the Journey” can be applied to all aspects of your life. You can look forward to another

enlightening and exciting convention this December at Kalahari Resort in Sandusky.

The first annual OAHPERD Summer Outing will take place on June 20th. I hope you plan to join us as we cheer on the Cleveland Indians versus the Tampa Bay Rays at Progressive Field.

You may have noticed more e-communications coming from the OAHPERD office. I hope that you find the information and articles helpful and informative. You can expect OAHPERD News to be delivered to your inbox every couple of weeks. Additionally, *NewsLine* will move to an online publication starting in the fall.

I am looking forward to the future of OAHPERD. My job as your Executive Director is to work with the Board of Directors to make this organization the best it can be. Our success also depends on your support and involvement. If you have any ideas for me or OAHPERD please do not hesitate to email or call me at lisa@assnoffices.com or (614) 228-4715.

Editor's Comments

Robert Stadulis

This issue seems to have evolved into a focus upon youth sport and burn-out of either young athletes or their coaches. Mike Sheridan's 15th "Coaching Toolbox" provides a description of factors affecting coaches that can lead to burn-out. Most importantly he provides suggested strategies of how to lessen and cope with the variables increasing coaching stress. Warren and Strand's article deals with the state of youth sports and offer a plea for more "free play." They argue that more free play and less "deliberate practice" and "early sport specialization" will lead to many benefits in the young athletes including less burn-out and dropping out. As a former youth sport coach, I endorse the messages of both and hope they resonate with OAHPERD readers of these articles.

For the physical education teachers, and their administrators, the Lorson, Musick and Mitchell sharing of the Ohio Physical Education Report Card Data from 2014, and the comparison to the 2013 data, should be a must read. It confirms what OAHPERD members know; that Ohio physical education students are achieving the Ohio Physical Education Benchmarks but that many of these schools are meeting outcomes with a minimum amount of allocated time to physical education. In his "President's Message," President Lorson urges OAHPERD members



to tell others what we are doing for a healthier and physically active Ohio. Think of how much more could be accomplished if physical education time in the schools could increase. Share that with decision makers like your state legislative representatives and your administrators.

I noted above that this issue contains Mike Sheridan's 15th "Coaching Toolbox" article. This deserves high praise and gratitude to him for these efforts. It serves the *Future Focus* and association goals well. Its impact can reach beyond OAHPERD as he notes in his article how our production expert, Marilyn Paselsky, prompted his focus on coach burn-out. I am sure he would appreciate hearing from others what topics they would like to see addressed in future "Coaching Toolbox" articles.

Have a wonderful, active and health filled summer. Don't hesitate to think about a contribution to *Future Focus*. Remember that the editor and Editorial Board members can help in the preparation of an article that shares with the membership a "best practice" that has been important in your professional experience that can benefit the OAHPERD membership.

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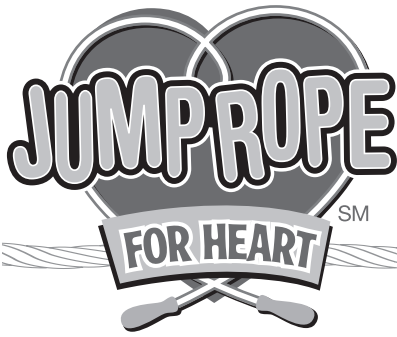
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Ohio Jump Rope For Heart/Hoops For Heart Opportunities

Sasha Taylor

We are truly grateful for your participation, hard work and time that you put into your events across Ohio as Jump and Hoops Coordinators! **OAHPERD thanks you!**

As our school year comes to a close, please don't forget about all the ways that you could get involved with Jump Rope for Heart and Hoops for Heart. A little bit of planning over the summer could really lead to great things for you next school year.

JRFH/HFH Professional Opportunities:

- Write a session proposal for the 2016 OAHPERD Convention in December, to share Jump or Hoops For Heart event success tips. Deadline: June 10th, see information at: <http://ohahperd.site-ym.com/page/call4presentations>
- Apply to have your jump rope team be an OAHPERD State Demo Team for the 2016–2017 school year. Deadline: End of September. New applications: on-line on OAHPERD's website in early June.
- Have your student teacher (who helped you with your event) apply for the OAHPERD JRFH/HFH \$500 Scholarship. Deadline: End of September. New applications: on-line on OAHPERD's website in early June.
- Plan your school's JRFH/HFH event.
- Surf American Heart Association's, OAHPERD's and SHAPE America's websites for JRFH/HFH resources. Bookmark these websites for quick reference.
- Present at the 2016 OAHPERD Convention on a JRFH/HFH topic.
- Attend the 2016 OAHPERD Convention and learn fresh ideas and how you can update your event for your school's JRFH or HFH event.
- Are you on your Local Professional Development Committee?- Sasha Taylor & Traci Grissom are seeking volunteers to help institute a CEU Plan for Ohio JRFH/HFH Coordinators. Contact us at sasha.taylor@bss.k12.oh.us and grissom_traci@dublinschools.net
- Apply for the SHAPE America \$2500 JRFH/HFH Grant, which also includes attending the 2017 SHAPE America Convention in Boston, MA. Deadline: Beginning of December: see information at: <http://www.shapeamerica.org/jump/recognition/index.cfm>
- Nominate a teacher you know for a JRFH/HFH Coordinator Recognition Award. Deadline: December 1, 2016: see information at: <http://www.shapeamerica.org/recognition/awards/jump-rope-for-heart-awards.cfm>

For any information about the items above or to give JRFH/HFH feedback for future improvements, please contact Sasha Taylor, OAHPERD State Jump Rope for Heart Coordinator, at sasha.taylor@bss.k12.oh.us and Traci Grissom, OAHPERD State Hoops for Heart Coordinator, at grissom_traci@dublinschools.net.



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"I was born with Ltransposition of the great arteries, a serious condition where the main arteries are switched and pumping blood to wrong places in the heart. I have had three surgeries so far to help switch my heart around and to help it work better. Hopefully with the efforts of Jump Rope For Heart, more can be learned about how to help hearts like mine. Thank you American Heart Association!"

Did You Know?

- Among children 2 to 19 years old, 31.8 percent are overweight and obese. That's 23.9 million children!
- On average, American children and adolescents spend nearly four hours watching television every day.
- More than 14 percent of children enter kindergarten overweight and are four times more likely than normal weight children to become obese by the eighth grade.
- Overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight adults.
- Numerous studies have demonstrated that increased physical activity is linked to better school performance.

Jump Rope For Heart is a national education and fundraising event created by the American Heart Association and SHAPE America-Society of Health and Physical Educators. Students learn to jump rope, learn the benefits of physical activity, healthy eating and avoiding tobacco; and raise funds for research and programs to fight heart disease and stroke.

Funds raised through Jump Rope For Heart give back to children, communities and schools through the American Heart Association's work:

- Ongoing discovery of new treatments through research
- Advocating at federal and state levels for physical education and nutrition wellness in schools
- CPR training courses for middle and high school students

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SHAPE America is a proud program partner of Jump Rope For Heart.

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Updating Your Coaching Toolbox:

Bridging the Gap Between Coaching Research and Practice

What is this column all about?

This column is the 15th in a series of articles in *Future Focus* written for coaches by a coach. The goal of this column is to provide information to coaches about recent research that is related to coaching in a user-friendly format. With this in mind, the author will briefly review a recent research article from a professional journal, critique it, and offer practical applications for coaches to use in their everyday coaching. It is the author's intent to encourage a realistic bridging of coaching science to coaching practice through discussions of realistic applications of research. This column will be written with coaches as the intended audience with the following assumptions:

1. Some coaches are interested in applying recent research from coaching science to their coaching.
2. Most coaches do not have easy access to professional journals that provide scholarly research on coaching science, nor do many coaches have time to read, understand, and digest articles in these publications.
3. Many of the scientific articles are written in a language that is appropriate for scholarly (academic) publications, but many of the writings are difficult to understand, thus making the application of the results to coaching practice difficult.

"Bridging the Gap between Coaching Research and Practice" is intended to offer coaches access to recent research in an easy-to-use set-up so that coaches may apply this knowledge to their coaching. If coaches also learn how to dissect and analyze research from reading this column, then this would be beneficial. Questions, comments, or suggestions about current and/or future articles and topics are welcomed at msherdan@tvschools.org.

Coaching Burnout: Challenges and Solutions

The inspiration for writing this article arose from an email sent by a reader of "The Coaching Toolbox" expressing her trepidation about some coaches and athletes who were possibly suffering from burnout. This reader described her involvement and enjoyment in helping coaches and student-athletes in their participation in an Ohio archery club. However, through some of her conversations with some of the coaches, she expressed some feelings of discouragement because of the dropout rate of some of the youth archers. She explained the challenges of archery club coaches in the following manner: archery coaches and athletes demonstrated a high level of commitment and sacrifice to their sport for a reasonable amount of time. However, at some point, it seemed that athletes were likely to drop out of the sport in favor of pursuing other more "glamorous" sports or activities. According to her, when athletes dropped out of sport, coaches suffered some discouragement and felt a sense of loss. It certainly seems reasonable to expect coaches to feel some disappointment, sadness and even resentment toward athletes with whom they had invested their time and energies, only to have the athletes drop out of their sport to pursue participation in other seemingly more fashionable or stylish activities. Coaches' feelings of disappointment or resentment could lead to some coaches feeling "burned out" and, if not addressed properly, could lead coaches to drop out. This devoted reader asked me to provide some direction on coach burnout and offer some possible tips for addressing challenges similar to the ones faced by these coaches.

The term "burnout" is mentioned in the mainstream media so frequently that the general public has likely become numb to the word. In fact, the general public likely has misperceptions about what the precursors of "burnout" are and may lack good information about how to prevent, recognize or treat this disorder. The term "burnout" gained acceptance in the 1970s where concerns arose about workers in the human service and health care settings who worked long hours to do whatever it took to help patients and clients but who received only minimal compensation (Raedeke & Kentta, 2013). Coaches face these same challenges: coaches at the youth sport levels (ages 5–18) are paid

little in compensation yet are expected to work long hours, often after completing their duties from their “day jobs.” Therefore, it seems that the nature of the coaching profession (long hours, limited pay, a helping occupation that is dependent upon the performance and success of others) would place coaches at high risk for burnout. In fact, research shows this to be true; in a review of research in the areas of burnout, Goodger, Gorely, Lavalee, and Harwood (2007) determined that until 2007, 23 articles had assessed coach burnout. Since that time at least seven more studies on coach burnout have been conducted and published. Clearly, coach burnout is an important topic that the research community finds worthy of investigation. However, what exactly is coach burnout? How can it be identified? What can coaches do to prevent or treat coach burnout? This article will attempt to answer some of the questions by reviewing a recently published book chapter on coaching burnout and will offer practical applications for coaches.

Book Chapter Review

Raedeke, T., & Kentta, G. (2013). Coach burnout. In P. Potrac, W. Gilbert & J. Denison (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sports Coaching* (pp. 424–435). London: Routledge.

What is burnout? According to the Raedeke and Kentta (2013), researchers in the areas of sport psychology (Goodger et al., 2007) developed the following description of burnout: “a psychological syndrome that is characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism and detachment from one’s job and reduced personal accomplishment characterized by a feeling of professional inefficacy and incompetence” (p. 425). Burnout is common for those who work in people-oriented occupations, where the provider/client is the primary focus of the concern

of the practitioner (e.g., counselor, nurse, teacher, coach). Coaches who feel burned out may experience physical and/or mental exhaustion from the demands of their jobs. Burned out coaches may also develop a negative attitude toward their athletes and begin to experience self-doubts about their abilities to help their athletes. This may lead to coaches psychologically distancing themselves from their athletes and from other significant others in their lives. Research has also determined that once burnout is experienced by coaches it is thought to be an enduring state. That is, coaches who experience burnout may not know that they are living with this psychological condition and may not know how to address it once they have fallen into it. Therefore, according to Raedeke and Kentta, helping a burned out coach deal with his symptoms can be a difficult challenge. Consequently, it is more practical to help coaches learn strategies to prevent burnout instead of trying to treat the condition once it occurs.

Practical applications for coaching

How can coaches prevent burnout? Many of the strategies suggested to prevent burnout have been adapted from the public health frameworks (Raedeke & Kentta, 2013). One such strategy that is suggested to prevent burnout is to reduce or eliminate work stress to reduce the incidences of new cases of stress. Theoretically, this sounds like a wonderful idea! Who among us would not be happier with less workplace stress? However, practically, this seems like a tall mountain to climb for coaches who experience a variety of stressors in their daily lives, including but not limited to: pressure from fans, parents, administrators, players, alumni expectations, etc. These challenges seem to be constant sources of stress

for coaches that are not likely to soon go away. Raedeke and Kentta (2013) suggest altering the work environment or learning how to cope more effectively with occupation stressors. The following are some strategies suggested by these authors.

Stress management strategies

- Change work habits
- Reduce hours worked
- Take more breaks
- Find a balance between work/personal life
- Learn effective time management strategies

Person-centered stress management strategies

- Stress inoculation training
- Relaxation/meditation
- Assertiveness training
- Interpersonal and social skills training
- Learn effective time management strategies

Most coaches whom I know would roll their eyes at many of these suggestions. For example, there is an unspoken code within the coaching community that implies that many of the coaches who are revered are the ones who are “always working.” Admiration is bestowed upon coaches who are tired, exhausted and who demonstrate the mental toughness to work relentlessly through repeated 20-hour days. National Football League coaches are known for this kind of overworking and sacrifice (Volin, 2013). In fact, this is often seen as a badge of honor and pride within the coaching community. For example, the following are common coaching colloquialisms: “No one is going to outwork us”; “We don’t take breaks”; “If we aren’t out there working then someone else is.” These kinds of comments are intended to create environments that emphasize working longer and harder than the competition.

It is assumed that these longer work hours result in more wins on the fields and courts. In fact, for some coaches, acting as a martyr is a veiled indicator of their own feelings of self-importance. Former Head NFL coach Herm Edwards said: “You generally arrive when it’s dark and you generally leave when it’s dark, and when you’re a coach your main concern is the players and the coaches. The last concern you have is really about yourself” (Volin, 2013). When coaches at youth sport levels see these types of comments from professional coaches, they naturally try to emulate them. However, there are clearly risks associated with this approach to coaching. Nevertheless,

few coaches would admit to being “burned out” because most view this as a weakness. Coaches who lack self-awareness or choose to ignore or reject their mental state are most often the difficult coaches to accept meaningful assistance. For coaches who are more self-aware or who do accept that they are burned out, there are some approaches that can be taken to help these coaches achieve greater balance.

How do we practically provide coaches with specific tactics that they can use to address their everyday grind? Raedeke and Kentta (2013) recommend that coaches should consider addressing one of following areas (see figure 1):

Few researchers have published research on evaluating strategies to prevent burnout. However, one study reported strategies used with ten Olympic coaches in Sweden (Lundqvist & Kentta, 2010). Coaches were taught to monitor their stress levels, their stressors and then recovery and reported more frequently engaging in strategies to assist recovery.

Vealey (2005) suggested compartmentalizing each part of one’s life: one part (what she refers to as a “zone”) as a coach and one part as the rest of one’s life. According to Vealey the key is to achieve well-being in each component of life through balance; if coaches focus only on their coaching “zone” then they will be more likely to experience burnout. On the other hand, if coaches focus only on the other components of life, then they will not likely reach goals that they set for themselves as coaches. Finding ways to live fully in each “zone” of life is the key to living better and achieving more in both areas.

According to Vealey (2005), burnout is not a sign of weakness or a simple response to stress. It happens over time and can lead to coaches dropping out of the profession if no adjustments or adaptive strategies are considered. To re-visit the challenges faced by the archery coaches discussed in the earlier part of this article, being able to accept what they can and cannot control is an important part of mental well-being and coaching. One of the common strategies that many healthy youth sport participants engage in is referred to as “sampling.” Sampling by young people occurs when they try different sports throughout their early to middle childhood years (Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2007). Then, as these children grow into adolescence, some athletes begin to specialize in one sport or another. This often occurs

	Possible areas of misfit between person and organization	Some possible solutions
Work overload	High job demands, long hours, few resources.	Learn how to prioritize all tasks that are required and “let some go” that are less important.
Lack of control	Individuals have little control over the work they do and have reduced sense of autonomy.	Learn what you can control and what you cannot control and devote your energy and concerns only to the “controllables.”
Insufficient reward	Perception of inadequate compensation and recognition for their work and lowered sense of pride for doing something meaningful.	Review reasons why you coach and prioritize them: if helping youth develop and grow is a top priority then take pride in this and accept that there will be sacrifices made in other areas (e.g., financial compensation).
Community in the work group	Perceived lack of trust, communication, support and collaboration.	Surround yourself with an inner circle of people whom you can trust and limit your contact with people whom you cannot trust.
Absence of fairness	Individuals feel they are not treated fairly compared to others in terms of workload, pay, promotion opportunities and recognition for their efforts	Feeling as though you are being treated fairly is very important. If you feel treated unfairly then this should be addressed with your superior.
Value conflict	Misfit between job requirements and individuals values and principles.	At the end of the day, if your values do not match your employer’s values, you might have to consider alternative employment opportunities where your values are a better match with your superiors

Figure 1 Tactics to achieve greater balance in work /life

at the same time as their interest wanes in other sports. Many young athletes are going to stay committed to sports in which they are interested and are more likely to drop out of sports where they have less interest. These interests often change through these developmental years.¹

Many athletes drop out of sport in the early teenage years and start to specialize in one sport (Côté et al., 2007). Therefore, the experiences described by the archery coaches earlier in this article are common experiences for many youth sport coaches. My own coaching experiences remind me how frustrating it was to invest in an athlete who was not as committed as I was. One key is understanding children's development as they pass through developmental stages of youth and adolescence and to encourage them to sample new sports (this may lead to dropping some other sports). Help inform the student athletes that this practice is a healthy way to experience all the good sorts of things that are associated with youth sports. It may not be that young athletes find that other sports are more "glamorous"; it just may be as simple as the student athletes' tastes have changed or their peer group's interests have adjusted. These changes are natural and go along with the many other changes that occur during this stage of life. Assuming that coaches are meeting athletes' needs and not placing too many demands upon them, part of the process of adolescent growth and development is likely to consist of dropping one activity and replacing it with another. However, I know how difficult it is to accept that the sport that we coach may not be our athletes' favorite sport. The sport we coach may be something that the athletes want to try for a while, and then decide to move on to another activity or sport. While difficult to

take, this is common practice among many pre-adolescent and adolescent sport participants.

Thanks to all of those coaches who are still involved in the gritty day-to-day grind of coaching and who continue to attempt to manage student-athletes' ever-evolving development. There are steps forward, steps backward and there will always be some time spent without seeing much progress in any direction. So hang in there, coach the ones who want to be coached, stay devoted to helping them reach for their goals and remind yourself that some of them will follow along and blossom while others will choose a different path. Some of their commitment will be related to your devotion and sacrifices and some of it will not be related at all to your good efforts. Remember that the best coaches are the ones whose athletes are having as much or more fun at the end of the season as they did when the season started. We are grateful for you guiding our sons and daughters towards reaching for their goals, dreams, and aspirations. We and they are lucky to have you!

Readers are invited to email comments and/or questions about this article to: msherdan@tvschools.org

Thank you to Marilyn Paselsky for all of her great work over these years and for your inspiration to write this article! You are the best!

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Editor's Note

- ¹ See refereed article (page 16) by Michelle Warren and Brad Strand, "Free Play: A Missing Element in Contemporary Youth Sports," which discusses early specialization in youth sport and burnout in youth sport participants.

Michael P. Sheridan, Ph.D. has more than 25 years of experience in education as a head college and high school coach, teacher, and administrator. Sheridan is an editorial board member and Associate Editor of the International Sport Coaching Journal (ISCJ), a peer-reviewed journal for coaching education professionals. Sheridan is also a member of the editorial board of Future Focus, a refereed journal for the Ohio Association of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (OHAHPERD). Sheridan is an elementary physical education teacher in the Tri-Valley School District.

Ohio Physical Education Evaluation Report Card Data 2013–2014

By Kevin Lorson, Macy Musick, and Stephen Mitchell

Beginning in 2013 Ohio's schools have reported physical education assessment data to the Ohio Department of Education. The purpose of this article is to summarize the second year (2014) of Physical Education Index (PEI) data reported to the Ohio Department of Education that appeared on each school's report card. The article will also describe the change in school's PEI scores from 2013 to 2014. Data collected for 2014 show a majority of schools scored in the moderate category (80.2%) of the Physical Education Index. The number of schools reporting less than 10 students in the grade band dropped from 18.4% in 2013 to 9.4 in 2014. When examining PEI change scores from 2013 to 2014, most schools went from less than 10 students in grade band to moderate. Overall, the data suggest Ohio's schools have been successful in meeting the benchmarks of the Ohio Physical Education Academic Content Standards.

Keywords: P.E. assessment, benchmarks, standards

Since 2012–13 Ohio's public and charter schools are required by Ohio Senate Bill 210 (Healthy Choices for Healthy Children Act, 2010) to report at the end of each school year their progress towards the achievement of the Ohio Physical Education Benchmarks. Senate Bill 210 required a school report card indicator for physical education with four components that appear on each school's Local Report Card from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). The four components include: a) score on the Physical Education Index (PEI—calculated from the physical education assessment data), and three Yes/No indicators of b) compliance with local wellness policy, c) participation in Body Mass Index screening and d) participation in a physical activity pilot program in which all students (grades K–12) in the district receive 30 minutes of daily physical activity excluding recess.

The key component of the report card is the PEI because this statistic

represents student learning relative to the Ohio Physical Education Standards and Benchmarks. Benchmarks are grade band outcomes (K–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–12). Ohio created a Physical Education Evaluation (ODE, 2012) to assess student progress in each of the benchmarks. In 2014 there were 2 benchmarks for each of the 6 physical education standards assessed for each grade band for a total of 12 ratings for each student. Student learning is assessed for each benchmark using specific tasks and rubrics provided within the ODE Evaluation Instrument (ODE, 2012). The assessment system is a three-level rating system of Advanced (score = 3), Proficient (2) and Limited (1). Student scores for each benchmark are recorded in the ODE Excel file (ODE, 2013). The ODE Excel file then automatically calculates an overall average score for each student across the benchmarks on the “student totals” page. The three-level rating system for students is Advanced (3.0–2.7), Proficient (2.69–1.75) or

Limited (<1.75). The student overall benchmark score is then summarized for all students in the school on the “Data for ODE” worksheet. The number of advanced, proficient and limited students is then used to determine the school's PEI score. The PEI is a three-level system of High, Moderate or Low that will appear on the school's report card. The PEI formula is: $[(3 \times \text{Number of Advanced}) + (2 \times \text{Proficient}) + (1 \times \text{Limited})] / (\text{Total \# of Advanced, Proficient and Limited students})$. A “high” PEI score is 3.0–2.7, “moderate” PEI is 2.69–1.75, or “low” is a PEI less than 1.75.

Purpose of the Current Study

Lorson and Mitchell (2014) summarized the 2013 report card data collected by ODE. In 2013 a total of 3,130 Ohio elementary, middle and high schools reported PEI data. Most schools (85.36%) were scored “moderate,” 13.14% scored “low,” and 1.5% of school earned a “high” rating.

Schools that did not report data or had less than 10 students in that grade band were not included in the Lorson and Mitchell (2014) article. The purpose of this article is to summarize the 2014 Ohio PEI report card ratings from ODE. The study will also compare the overall percentage of schools in each category from 2013 to the 2014 data and will summarize the change in PEI from 2013 to 2014.

Method

Data collection

Data were collected from the school's score on the 2013 and 2014 ODE Report Cards. Report cards are available on the ODE website at <http://reportcard.education.ohio.gov> (ODE, 2015). Schools that are a part of the state report card system include public and charter schools; private schools are not required to report PEI data. Once the PEI (High, Moderate, Low, <10) was found on the school's report card it was recorded on a data sheet that included both the 2013 and 2014 PEI scores. A total of 3,446 Ohio schools had report card data for 2014.

Change Scores

The 3,446 schools with data for 2013 and 2014 were used to examine change scores. A PEI change score was calculated by subtracting the 2013 score from the 2014 score. PEI change scores for schools that reported a PEI in 2013 and 2014 could range from a +2 (a "low" to "high" rating) to a -2 ("high" to "low"). No change (0) is when a school earned the same rating in 2013 as 2014. The

TABLE • 1

2014 Ohio Physical Education Index Scores		
Level	Number of Schools	%
High	76	2.2
Moderate	2763	80.2
Low	284	8.2
<10	323	9.4
Total	3446	100

schools that reported "Less than 10 students" in 2013 and/or 2014 were grouped together. Schools with "Less than 10 students" in 2013 or 2014 were labeled "no change."

Results

2014 Data¹

Table 1 summarizes the 2014 PEI data. Most schools scored in the Moderate category. Overall, approximately 82.4% (2.2% High, 80.2% Moderate) of Ohio's schools were successful in meeting the Ohio Physical Education Benchmarks in 2014. This is similar to the 2013 data which saw 80.8% of schools scoring in the High or Moderate categories. The "High" category has the fewest number of schools (76) in 2014, similar to 2013. The number of schools in the High category was larger in 2014 (76) than in 2013 (47). There were also fewer schools reporting "Less than 10 students" in 2014 (323) than 2013 (634). Figure 1 compares the percentage of schools in each category (High, Moderate, Low, <10) for 2013 and 2014.

¹ Data from ODE in 2013 did not include less than 10 as that response was classified as a non-report. In 2014 ODE saw this as an important category to track, so the percentages in this study include all of the categories (High, Moderate, Low, <10) while the first study only included (High, Moderate, Low). Thus, the percentages from between the two years are not directly comparable.

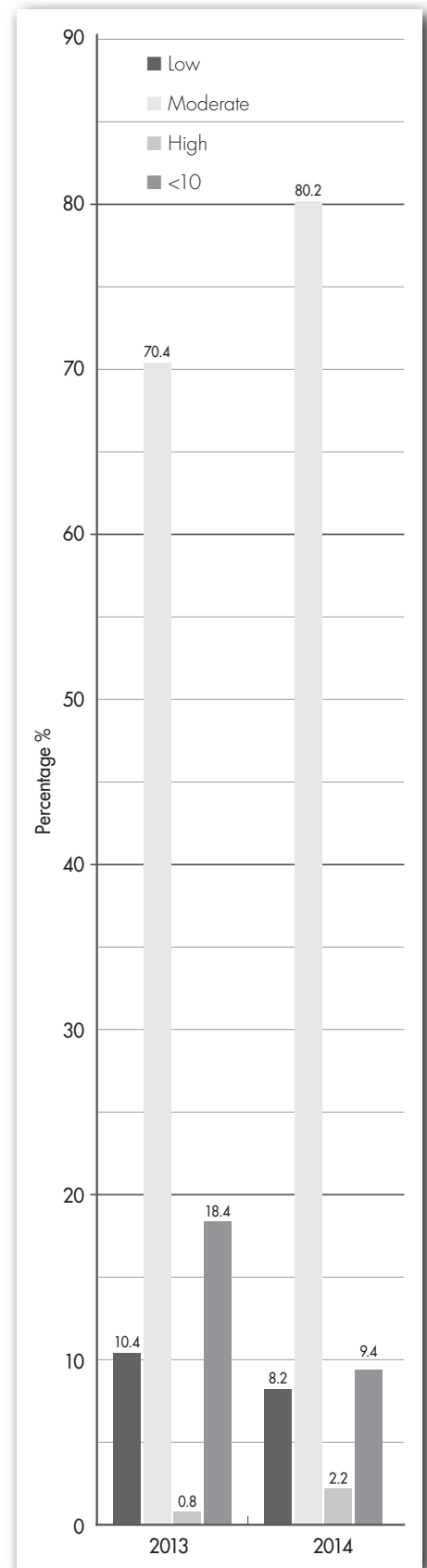


Figure 1. Summary (percent of schools) of 2013 and 2014 Ohio PEI Scores

TABLE • 2

PEI change scores from 2013 to 2014				
Change Score	Schools (N = 3,446)	%	Description	Change Example (2013-14)
Schools with 2013 & 2014 PEI Score				
0	2,342	70.0	Same score in 2013 as 2014	
	(130)	(5.6)	Low	1-1
	(2,195)	(93.7)	Moderate	2-2
	(17)	(0.7)	High	3-3
+1	243	7.0	PEI one level higher in 2014 than 2013	
	(207)	(85.2)	(Low to Moderate)	1-2
	(36)	(14.8)	(Moderate to High)	2-3
+2	5	0.1	Low to Moderate	1-3
-1	111	3.2	PEI one level lower in 2014 than 2013	3-2, 2-1
	(98)	(88.3)	(High to Moderate)	
	(13)	(11.7)	(Moderate to Low)	
-2	0	0.0	High to Low	3-1
Less than 10 students in 2013				
0	212	6.2	Less than 10 in 2013, Less than 10 in 2014	<10 - <10
3	18	0.5	Less than 10 in 2013 to High in 2014	<10 - 3
2	348	10.1	Less than 10 in 2013 to Moderate in 2014	<10 - 2
1	56	1.6	Less than 10 in 2013 to Low in 2014	<10 - 1
PEI score in 2013, Less than 10 in 2014				
3	1	0.9	High in 2013 to Less than 10 in 2014	3 - <10
2	98	88.3	Moderate in 2013 to Less than 10 in 2014	2 - <10
1	12	10.8	Low in 2013 to Less than 10 in 2014	1 - <10

Note. 3 = High, 2 = Moderate, 1 = Low, <10 = Less than 10 students in the grade band. Numbers in () represent subcategories within each change score category

PEI Change Scores

Table 2 summarizes the PEI change scores from 2013 to 2014. A majority of schools (70.0%) saw no change in their PEI score. Most (93.7%) of those “No Change” schools were a Level 2 in 2013 and remained a Level 2 in 2014. A total of 243 schools improved one level, with

207 moving from Level 1 to Level 2. A small percentage (111 schools or 3.2%) of schools decreased a level in 2014 with 98 of those 111 moving from Level 3 to Level 2.

A total of 634 schools reported “Less than 10 students” in 2013 and in 2014 there were 311 fewer schools reporting “Less than 10 students.”

Looking at the PEI change scores for the “Less than 10 students” in 2013, 212 (50.2%) reported “Less than 10 students” in 2013 and remained the same for 2014. For the 422 schools that reported “Less than 10” in 2013, but did report a PEI score in 2014, 348 scored had a Moderate PEI score. In contrast, 111 schools moved from a PEI score of High, Moderate or Low in 2013 to “Less than 10 students” in 2014. Most schools that moved to “Less than 10 students” recorded a Moderate (98) or Low (12) in 2013. It is unclear from this data collection why schools moved from PEI reporting to “Less than 10 students.”

Discussion

A majority of Ohio schools were meeting the Ohio Physical Education Benchmarks for 2013 and 2014. This is an important outcome and shows that Ohio physical education students are achieving the benchmarks. While some may be disappointed with the large percentage of “Moderate” schools, it is important to note that “Moderate” is effective and meets the outcomes. It is also important to note that many of these schools are meeting outcomes with a minimum amount of allocated time to physical education. In a 2008 study on average time students spent in physical education class, Ohio’s elementary students (Grades 1-5) received approximately 60 minutes of instruction per week. Middle school students (Grades 6-8) only received about 80 minutes, meeting an average of 2.1 times a week (Ohio Department of Education, 2008). High school students receive a minimum of two semesters that include at least 120 hours of instruction. More time allocated for physical education might lead to higher scores for both students and PEI.

A “High” PEI score is extremely difficult based on the current calculation of the PE index. A student

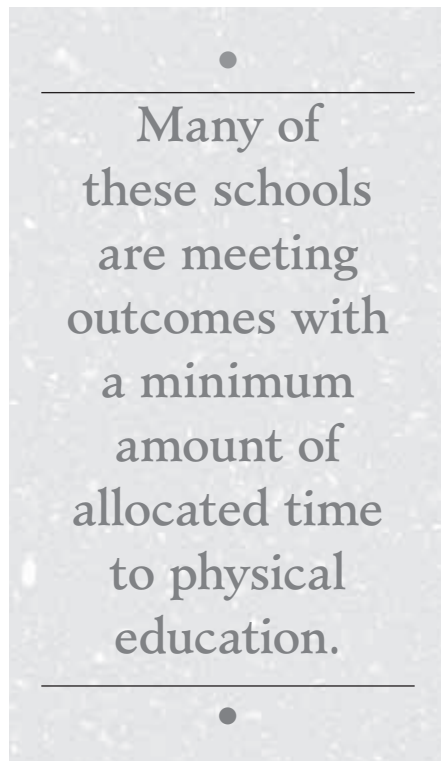
must earn approximately 33 of the 36 possible benchmark points to score Advanced. A “High” PEI for a school requires almost 90% of the students to score Advanced. A possibility is to move away from student averages to determine the PEI and instead focus on the percentage of students achieving each benchmark; that might provide a more accurate assessment of the quality of the program.

Change scores show that most PEI scores remain stable from 2013 to 2014. That may be due to the three-level scoring system being less sensitive to changes in student or school performance. Looking at the “Benchmark Totals” worksheet in the ODE file provides relevant and specific information about how students in the school are performing for each benchmark. This information is more relevant to use in reflecting about curriculum and teaching.

While specific reasons were not part of this study, more schools had a PEI score in 2014 than 2013. The change scores for those schools with “Less than 10 students” in 2013 to a reported score in 2014 shows that accountability might be working. These schools might have realized that data must be reported in order to be in compliance with SB 210 in 2014. What is unknown is whether the schools reporting “Less than 10 students” are in compliance and actually have less than 10 students in that grade band or are instead non-compliant. ODE should work to clarify this coding through changes in the reporting system, moving from an overall report by school to tracking individual students or following up with schools to ensure schools with less than 10 students are accurately reporting. This will force school districts to be in compliance and show they are meeting the requirements spelled out in the Ohio Revised Code and Operating Procedures.

Future Directions

It will be important to study the impact of achieving these outcomes on lifetime physical activity. This was just the second year of assessment implementation and as students move through each of the grade bands, scores might begin to rise in the middle and high school grade bands because students are achieving the prerequisite benchmarks. Still to be examined in greater depth is the impact of the Ohio Physical Education Evaluation and PEI scores on teachers, students, curriculum and administrators.



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Free Play: A Missing Element in Contemporary Youth Sports

By Michelle Warren and Brad Strand

Young athletes are almost required to participate in athletics at exceedingly young ages in order to keep up with the programs as they age. Because these programs are starting at much younger ages, parents typically decide in which sports their children will participate. In many instances parents are led to believe that their child or children need to begin sports training at an early age and then focus on one sport in which to specialize, again at an early age. Talent identification programs are becoming popular as a means to predict a child's potential in a certain sport based upon the physical, mental, and technical aspects that they possess. But because children change and mature at such different rates early talent identification may eliminate those children who mature later. Instead, youngsters should be encouraged to play multi-sports and engage in player controlled free play as opposed to too much coach controlled deliberate practice.

Keywords: Youth sports, Free play, Deliberate practice

Consider the words of a sign titled, *He's Just a Little Boy*, placed on a youth baseball field:

He's Just a Little Boy

He stands at the plate with his heart pounding fast.

The bases are loaded, the die has been cast.

Mom and dad cannot help him, he stands all alone.

A hit at this moment would send his team home.

The ball meets the plate, he swings and he misses.

There's a groan from the crowd, with some boos
and some hisses.

A thoughtless voice cries, "Strike out the bum."

Tears fill his eyes, the game is no longer fun.

So open up your heart and give him a break,
for it's moments like this, a man you can make.

Keep this mind when you hear someone forget,
he is just a little boy, and not a man yet.

It is disappointing that it takes measures like this to get parents to step back and let their children play.

This sign mentioned in the opening paragraph is proof of how drastically youth sports have changed over time. Coaches want to win at all costs, parents want their child to be the best, and all the while many youngsters simply want to be with their friends and have fun (Farrey, 2008). Sport is a way of life, an important aspect of many children's upbringing and socialization into adulthood. In this way, many parents, coaches, and athletes believe that the pursuit of excellence in sports is valuable and teaches many life lessons (Farrey, 2008). Many young children train diligently in the hopes of playing in an all-star game, starring in a varsity sport, being pursued by collegiate and professional scouts, or becoming a collegiate, and possibly, a professional athlete (Farrey, 2008).

The picture of youth sports today is far different than it was 30 years ago. Free play was a more common

occurrence on playgrounds, baseball fields, and community basketball courts. Youngsters gathered together and organized games with friends from all over town, and the only adult involvement was when it was time to go home for supper. Free play is defined as an unstructured and spontaneous form of activity that improves motor skills while developing creativity and encouraging interaction with others (Nationwide Children's Hospital Sports Medicine, n.d.).

Multi-sport participation, talent development, and free play, essentials in a long forgotten sport experience, have been replaced with early sport specialization, talent identification programs, and deliberate practice. All of these features have profoundly impacted youth sports in recent years. One may question why youth sports has changed so drastically and seek answers as to what can be done

to keep children intrigued with athletics for years to come. The remainder of this paper seeks to answer that question and poses recommendations to encourage long-term engagement.

Early Sport Specialization or Sport Diversification

When a child is asked at the age of seven what his or her favorite sport is, the answer he or she gives will often change by the time the sun goes down that evening. Friendships, parents, and psychological experiences play a vital role in sport participation at early ages and each of these factors can change a child's perspective within the blink of an eye. These changes in perspective are accompanied by the drastic changes young children's bodies go through in such short amounts of time. With that being said, why should children have to choose one sport at such an early age?

The world of contemporary youth sports has become brutal. With try-outs, year round practices, and traveling teams, it is nearly impossible for children to commit to more than one activity. After tournament fees, hotel rooms, time commitments, and travel, some families may only be able to afford having their child or children participate in one sport. With specified seasons sometimes lasting ten months out of the year, parents become anxious that their child or children will fall behind in skill development if they are not, for example, throwing a fastball of 70 mph at the age of eight.

Participation at an early age in multiple sports, known as sport diversification, allows children to develop different strengths (Roehl & Strand, 2015). Concerning cognitive and biological development, children are most able to benefit from learning new skills at an early

age (Epstein, 2013). Such development allows children to absorb information quickly while making proper technique a habit. For example, baseball players develop hand-eye coordination and agility, whereas soccer players develop foot-eye coordination and cardiovascular endurance. Along with the numerous physical benefits, participation



in multiple sports allows athletes to develop various leadership qualities (Côté, Horton, MacDonald, & Wilkes, 2009) because one's position within each sport affords athletes the opportunity to play different roles.

There are a number of sports, however, for which children begin participation at very young ages. For

example, female gymnasts and figure skaters are specifically trained at young ages because the physiques of young women's bodies are ideal for the movements performed in these sports (Baker, 2003). Young children who are driven and have specific goals may also benefit from early specialization (Malina, 2010) as young children involved in baseball may dream of the Little League World Series and likely begin fulfilling these dreams from very young ages. While training for these specific sports at early ages can lead to better performance and understanding of the sport, the countless hours a child spends training for a specific sport can easily lead to burnout and a loss of interest as well as an increased rate for future injury (Wiersma, 2000).

Early specialization is a trend that is becoming the norm in youth sports throughout the country (Jayanthi, Pinkham, Dugas, Patrick, & LaBella, 2013) and parents are feeling more obligated to get their children involved early for fear that their child or children may fall behind in sport skill development compared to their peers and thus be unsuccessful (Malina, 2010; Roehl & Strand, 2015). This has been described as sport entrapment (Benson & Strand, 2014) and this fear drives parents to put pressure on their children to become involved quickly and stay involved whole-heartedly.

Some have suggested that children should not be introduced to organized sports until age six (Robertson & Way, n. d.) as team sports involve advanced cognitive, physical, and psychological factors that most children do not develop until at least age eight (Farrey, 2008). Being expected to perform beyond what one is capable of may be difficult, if not impossible, and can lead a child to immediately feel discontent. Free play takes expectations

and direction out of the equation and allows children to discover aspects of sport for themselves. Unorganized games force children to interact without adult supervision, try new things, and keep their bodies active. Allowing children to feel intrinsic motivation (behavior that is driven by internal rewards), rather than being pushed or forced to participate by a parent, teacher, or coach, may allow a child to discover his or her true enjoyment for a sport (McCormick, n.d.).

Jayanthi, et. al. (2013) pointed out that less hours given to practicing a sport will result in less expertise, but mentioned that many may contradict this and believe that to obtain an elite level, specific focus should be given when athletes are older than many programs' starting ages. The pros and cons of sports specialization in young athletes are endless when considering time, talent, and potential injury (Wiersma, 2000). The average time that an athlete puts into a specific sport has gradually evolved into 14 years by the time one reaches the age of 18. In this example children would be starting their sport experience by the age of four. Those who favor sport specialization for young athletes assume that with this time dedication, other children who have not put in the same amount of time and practice will filter out quickly. While the basics are learned best at early ages (Christianson & Deutsch, 2012), it cannot be assured that early specializing will allow for a child to be superior as he or she grows and matures.

Time is not the only thing given up when starting at such young ages. The risk of injury may rise the younger a child starts due to prolonged "wear and tear" of specific movements (Brenner, 2007). For example, a young volleyball player may feel

the need to serve over hand much sooner than the body will allow; the power needed for a child to get the ball over the net on an overhand serve at a young age is too much for a young body and can lead to future shoulder injuries. In regards to injuries it is clear that the earlier a child begins intense and specified training, the more likely he or she will eventually suffer an injury.

●

With so many factors impacting long-term performance and success, it is almost impossible to predict potential in any young athlete.

●

Talent Identification, Talent Selection, or Talent Development

Whose child will be the next LeBron James, Tiger Woods, or Venus Williams?

Many parents believe that with the correct discipline, training, and coaching their child will "make it big." With so many factors impacting long-term performance and success, it is

almost impossible to predict potential in any young athlete. Although one is sometimes able to identify the 'stars' in a group of young athletes, puberty and the unknown outcomes of growth and development make it almost impossible to predict a child's future success (Pearson, Naughton, & Torade, 2006, Vaeyens, Lenoir, Williams, & Philippaerts, 2008).

Malina (2010) distinguished two labels of abilities, gifted and talented, that when used to describe children at an early age probably encourage specialization. Giftedness is defined as the use of high levels of natural abilities (ability that is inherited) and is what one sees from an athlete who has finesse, shape, size, agility, strength, innate court sense, endurance, and simply appears to know what to do with a ball without much effort. Talent is revealed when one has the ability to master superior skills in any field of human activity and can be explained as the knowledge that one obtains with experience; for example, how to execute and run specific offenses and defenses, or knowing what to do in specific situations. Developing natural abilities (giftedness) into talents involves practice, maturation, and long hours of training (Coyle, 2009) and many even question if there is a thing such as an inherent "sports gene" (Epstein, 2013). No matter if there is or isn't a sports gene, in order for inherently gifted individuals, or those not so gifted, to develop and reach a superior talent level, a training plan must be specific, individualized, and balanced to reach an athlete's optimal ceiling of skill (Colvin, 2008).

Certain traits or abilities can often be identified in children during the playing of unorganized games in recess, physical education classes, and after-school play. Knowing a child's specific abilities might save time and financial consumption for a

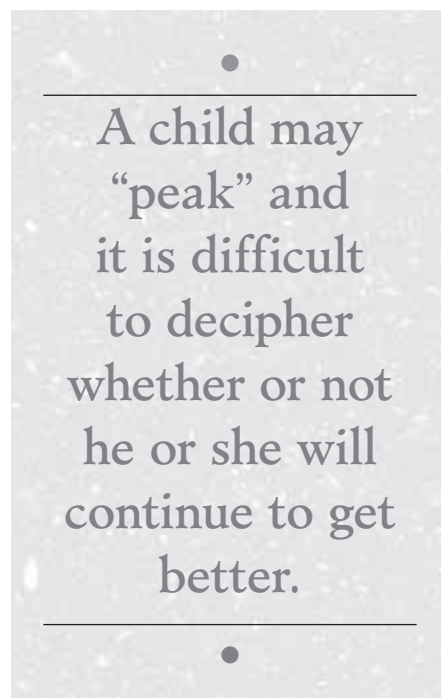
family. The early recognition, or identification, of a child's abilities might allow that child to be more successful at a higher level. Talent identification programs are designed to recognize where one's abilities and talents lie and allow them to optimize those abilities (Vaeyens, et. al., 2008). A major problem with talent identification programs, however, is that they are unable to exactly define talent and cannot completely assure that certain children do or do not possess certain abilities; essentially, the data is not concrete enough to accurately determine talent (Vaeyans, et. al., 2008).

While talent identification programs focus on the physical, mental, and technical aspects of children's abilities (Goncalves, Rama, & Figueriredo, 2012), they (the children) may or may not retain these abilities and some children may just be growing into their abilities (Ericsson, 2012). A child may "peak" and it is difficult to decipher whether or not he or she will continue to get better. An athlete who may be the best at a sport on his or her YMCA team at age 12 may get cut from his or her high school sport team just four years later (Vaeyens, et. al., 2008). Most can visualize an eight year-old all-star player who is moved up to play with the older kids and then never gets better. They "peak" early and eventually get beaten out by younger players or same aged players who have improved and surpassed them because of development and acquisition of skills. Unfortunately, in these instances the athletes may then simply quit that particular activity.

It is so easy for coaches and parents to be blinded by what a child can momentarily accomplish that they become oblivious to another child's potential (Vaeyans, et. al., 2008). If coaches used talent development programs along with talent identification

programs, athletes would have a better opportunity to experience success as they mature (Vaeyans, et. al., 2008). In youth sports it is vital for coaches to be conscious of what players might achieve in the future rather than what a player can or cannot do presently.

Physical size plays a huge role in youth sports as being taller, stronger, and faster gives one a huge advantage (Pearson, Naughton, & Torade, 2006) and in many instances lead coaches to identify those athletes as



gifted, when in fact they are simply more mature than their peers. But to the contrary, it has been reported that height, weight, body composition, strength, and skill are unreliable in determining talent simply because growth and maturation following puberty make it difficult to predict any future success (Pearson, Naughton, & Torade, 2006; Vaeyens, et al., 2008).

So, instead of testing children and trying to correlate their height, weight, size, etc., to determine how

those variables will take children to the next level, coaches and parents should be teaching these children how to understand and value the maturation process and their physical growth. Coaches, teachers, and parents must be cognizant in helping those who mature early to keep their success in perspective and explain to them that eventually others may catch up to their skill level. Similarly, coaches, teachers, and parents must avoid comparing those who mature later to those athletes who have had early success, while encouraging and recognizing their individual improvements.

Deliberate Practice versus Free Play

Deliberate practice has been defined as "highly structured activity that requires effort, generates no immediate rewards, and is motivated by the goal of improving performance rather than inherent enjoyment" (Côté, Lidor, & Hackforrt, 2009, p. 8). With deliberate practice athletes who struggle with a particular aspect of a sport are given strategies to practice repetitively so that the correct motion, be it used in an open or closed setting, can become a habit. This deliberate practice helps them fine-tune their body control and maximize their routines so the action becomes automatic. Being aware of one's own discrepancies allows one to assess what needs to be done to improve one's abilities.

In order for athletes to deliberately practice they need to focus on specific skills that one struggles to perform correctly, or even at all, and then must repeat that skill correctly until they have perfected it (Côté, Lidor, & Hackforrt, 2009). Repetition is the key component of deliberate practice because when one performs a skill over and over again, he or she is able to recognize what is being done incorrectly,

determine what works and what does not work, and become capable of controlling the task to perform it to the best of their ability. For example, a golfer could go to a driving range and simply hit ball after ball after ball with no real intention other than hitting the balls. Or, s/he could choose a pitching wedge with a three-quarter swing and work on hitting the ball to a green 90 yards away while refining the backswing by making sure the left arm moves to no more than parallel on the backswing. It is not only important to practice with purpose, but also to think with purpose. In the golf scenario, this golfer is practicing so that when s/he has a 90-yard shot he will



automatically, confidently, and without question know that he should hit a pitching wedge with a three quarter backswing.

Free play, allows participants to explore, use their imaginations, and use their decision-making skills without interference from teachers, coaches, or parents. Free play is what one sees on school playgrounds during recess and in neighborhood after-school pickup games. Research has found that free play increases athletes' passion and motivation to play the sport (Active for Life, 2015). In addition, free play creates what

researchers call "field sense," which is the ability to anticipate people and objects in motion.

Take soccer in Brazil for example. Many of those children live in poverty and kick around a round object in the dirt with their neighbors and family engaged in free play soccer. Very few of these children ever play on organized teams with structured and deliberate practice. However, as a result of this unrestricted free play they develop unique skills and abilities and learn how to maneuver the ball in creative ways that might be prohibited in a structured coach controlled practice. As a result, many extraordinary soccer players who come from Brazil never grew up playing in structured games of soccer, but nonetheless, still grew up playing soccer (Epstein, 2013).

Conclusion

How do you measure a player's work ethic? How do you know when an athlete has maxed out to his or her full potential? How do players handle mistakes and criticism? There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions, and every coach will answer each of them a bit differently. But a truly exceptional coach can often be able to identify talent and know how to take that talent to the next level. Parents of children involved in youth sports want success for their children, which is understandable; however, as studies have shown, predicting a child's success based on their physical capabilities is almost impossible. Instead of looking towards the future, parents and coaches should be focusing on what children are capable of achieving in the present.

Focusing all of a young athlete's time and talent on one sport makes them less versatile athletically, as well as more likely to experience

burn-out later in their career. Involvement in multiple sports provides athletes with physical, cognitive, and sociological benefits that aide in continued future involvement in sport. Further, research has consistently failed to find that early specialization and intense training is essential for later elite level performance (Baker, Côté, & Abernethy, 2003; Carlson, 1988; Moesch, Elbe, Hauge, & Wikman, 2011; White & Oatman, 2009).

Across the country children are encouraged to attend multiple sport camps and participate in skill development opportunities at younger and younger ages. Instead of sending these six and seven year olds to camps and clinics, what better way to get them interested and learning about the game than an open gym or a pick-up game of soccer? Unstructured play allows opportunities for children to be creative and to take risks because they know that they will not be reprimanded by a coach or a spectating parent (Changing the Game Project, n.d.). They learn rules along with cooperation and are challenged by playing with and against older athletes. When children are exposed to free play, they become self-motivated and that is when they truly fall in love with the game (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993).

Take away scoreboards, traveling teams, and emotionally invested parents from youth sports and value the use of unstructured free play. The innovation and passion of children blossoms when there is a focus on simply playing the game, without an emphasis on specializing in a sport or winning a championship. As one matures in sport there will be ample time for specialization, deliberate practice, and talent development.

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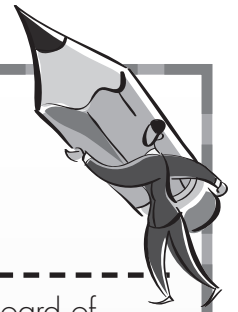
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