

SAINT FRANCIS SPORTS MEDICINE

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- ⊕ There's More to Youth Sports Than Winning, Speaker Says
- ⊕ Multisport Participation Offers Benefits for Young Athletes

Inaugural Youth Sports Parents Clinic Focuses on Life Skills and Safety

Sportsmanship, bonding and learning are more important things in life than success in sports. There are crucial roles parents can play in the lives of young athletes.

Rob Miller, a guest speaker from ProActive Coaching, discussed these topics during his presentation September 16 at the first Youth Sports Parents Clinic, a program of Saint Francis Medical Center's Sports Medicine.

Heidi J. Hunter, MD, physical medicine and rehabilitation physician at Saint Francis Medical Center, also gave a presentation on the identification and treatment of concussions in young athletes.

"Rob talked about ways parents can nurture their child's athletic performance, create positive memories and show respect," says David Enderle, ATC, certified athletic trainer at Saint Francis Medical Center. "As athletic trainers, we are in a position to see how parents can have a significant effect on their child's ability to enjoy athletics."



David Enderle,
ATC

Miller encouraged parents to understand that their child's success does not determine whether they are good parents or not. Instead, the healthier track is to focus on the experience and enjoy the process with their son or daughter.

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“Winning and athletic success are not the biggest things in a young athlete’s life, and it shouldn’t be for the parents, either,” Miller said. “Sports are a great opportunity to be part of our kids’ lives, but not have it be our life.”

For more information about the role of parents and young athletes, please call the Sports Medicine team at Saint Francis Medical Center at 573-331-5153.

Young Athletes Gain by Not Specializing in One Sport

Grade school and high school athletes who participate in multiple sports typically experience physical and mental benefits compared to their peers who specialize in one sport.

Avoiding burnout likely is the most significant advantage to participating in multiple sports during the year. The unrealistically high expectations that often accompany single-sport specialization can take the fun out of sports for young athletes, eliminating any perceived benefit from such singular focus.

Taking time off to participate in another activity can generate renewed enthusiasm when preparations for the primary sport start up again. This can have a cumulative positive effect over years of participation.

Young muscles need a break

In addition to changing things up on the mental side of things, participation in second and third sports has been shown to prevent muscle fatigue and overuse injuries. In effect, multisport athletes engage in cross-training simply by participating in alternate activities.

Young athletes who concentrate on a single sport or set of athletic movements can develop imbalances as a result of weakened muscles. This can lead to injuries that may not have occurred with a more well-rounded physical routine.

Read the personal history section of any college or professional team’s website and you will see that most top-flight athletes participated in multiple sports early in their careers. For example, football players often report enhanced body awareness from participating in wrestling or track and field.

Plan B might become Plan A

Improving overall hand-eye coordination, endurance and muscle tone all constitute advantages for multisport athletes. There also are numerous instances in which young athletes found their true sports passion or earned their college scholarship outside of their initial focus.

Spending time with different groups of teammates and coaches often results in enhanced teamwork and leadership skills, and encourages better attendance in schools. In the event your young athlete doesn’t turn out to be the next superstar, the skills will pay dividends the rest of their life.

For more information about the benefits of being a multisport athlete, please call the Sports Medicine team at Saint Francis Medical Center at 573-331-5153.

