

SPORTS IMPACT STUDENTS,

Tedious injuries can be prevented; health risks remain part of game

CHRISTOPHER ERBIN

Staff Reporter

Injury: It is the single most threatening word to student athletes and their teams. While high school competitors may not fear injury, post injury rehabilitation is taken seriously because it takes much longer than people expect it to. Players end up missing playing time, and their role in high school sports is often restricted to the sidelines.

Nearly 7.2 million teenagers across America take part in high school sports competitions to demonstrate their athleticism and determination and, more than anything, to do what they love and excel at. However, a recent increase in pressures brought on by school, friends and family correlates with a significant increase in injuries among high school athletes who are pushing themselves

a little too far. In some cases, these injuries result in the termination of the athlete's season, or the injury may even end a player's athletic career.

According to a study conducted at Ohio State University, in the 05-06 school year, nearly two million high school sports-related injuries resulted in 500,000 doctor visits and 30,000 visits to the hospital. Studies done by the university show that certain types of injuries occur much more frequently than others and are often a result of athletes overworking themselves without taking the necessary precautions.

By far the most frequently occurring injuries are those classified as sprains and strains, injuries that can often be prevented if athletes stretch out for 15 minutes before their activity. The Ohio State study also showed that an insignificant percentage of these injuries occurred during competition. Most occurred during practice. Many doctors at the university have come to the conclusion that practice-related injuries are the result of athletes failing to warm up and overstraining in the early stages of practice.

"It is so hard just sitting there and watching other people warm up and mentally

prepare for the game when all you can do is support them from the sidelines," Kellie Trafton, sophomore soccer player, said of the injury she suffered this fall.

The second and third leading causes of injury are concussion/contusion and fractures. These kinds of injuries often occur during competition when athletes are fiercely engaged in the game. Still, appropriate equipment and other precautions could help prevent competition-related injuries. A knee brace may not prevent a basketball player from diving for a loose ball or driving hard to the hoop to get to the free throw line, but it may reduce the damaging impact of risky maneuvers.

"So far, the ankle braces that the basketball coaches recommend have really served their purpose. Last year, I was on crutches for about three weeks because of a bad ankle sprain and they have prevented any major injuries this year," Alex Frye, freshman.

Among the nine sports tested at Ohio State, football piled up the highest number of injuries with an average 12 percent of players sidelined for the year due to serious injury. Soccer was the leading injury culprit for girls' sports and an



Kyle Kraus, junior, is one of many student athletes who have suffered long-term sport injuries. Kraus was sidelined with torn tendons in his ankle when he sprained it last winter during off-season training.

Photo by Cole Fiala

average of three players fell to the sidelines over the course of the season. These numbers, however small they are, could affect team's success since injuries predominately affected team starters and go-to players.

Wrestling was the only sport in which teams lost nearly as many athletes to competition-related as practice injuries. It also racked up the longest

average leave time for injured players. Baseball and softball rounded out the bottom of the injury chart, averaging only two player injuries over a period of two weeks or more.

The Lions have had their fair share of sports-related injuries, including accidents that have sidelined competitors for significant periods of time. Zach Sramek, sophomore, was entering his first year on the Varsity Football Team when he injured himself during practice. He was leg-whipped which resulted in a broken femur. Sramek was sidelined for three months and supported his teammates from the bench for the rest of the season.

"It sucks because you are working hard and nothing feels like it's getting better," said Sramek of his injury.

Sramek is now healing well and continuing rehabilitation. Despite his disappointment with this football season, Sramek looks forward to competing next season. He is also a member of the Varsity Wrestling Team and plans to compete in track later this spring.

The studies conducted at Ohio State University show that although some athletes will sustain competition-related injuries due to the nature of competitive sports, many sports injuries can be prevented. Athletes can make a conscious effort to warm up prior to practice or a game, and they can suit up with the appropriate equipment.

Demanding sports c

HILLARY KRIPPAEHN & HILLI CAVARELLO

Staff Reporters

Sports plays a big role in some student's lives, as they find themselves running from practice to practice and staying up late to finish assignments. Students are feeling the pressure.

Callan Gray, freshman, plays both basketball and volleyball. The two seasons overlap and are played year round except for two months during the summer. Her typical afternoon includes school, one practice, another practice and then homework until late into the night. Gray enjoys her busy schedule and uses it to her advantage.

"Yeah, I love playing sports and it keeps me busy," Gray said. Although Gray likes the busy aspect of sports, she doesn't like the time consuming part.

"Sometimes (sports) interfere with my social and homework time," Gray said.

Sports can be a great social outlet too. Athletes can make friends and bond over common interests. Being a part of a team

Off

IKE MCGINNIS

Camps, weight lifting and open field athlete's off-season have a longer off a regular season more time to work to get bigger, faster especially during when school work the way. Reed Nicholson, basketball and b sports include im mer training and ticipation in s leagues. Summer sports have no p only games.

"When there is over baseball and basketball. The coaches they have a lot of both," Nicholson. Nicholson believes the most important season training for plays and that su more relaxed and "It helps you work in your game. Pced playing time, s Nicholson said.

"I believe the off most important t ers to improve the skills," David E boys basketball c The basketball te gym time to sho ing the year and an overnight cam University every

gives students.

and stay out of

"It (sports) k doing other thi shouldn't," Gray s

During team pr competitions, althl together and push to perform. Whitn senior, cites her tri with the Cross Co when teammates l succeed by offeri providing motivat

"My favorite thi sports is working t my teammates," H

Injuries also ad for athletes. Sprain torn muscles and l can have a major i Playing more than may become impo physical therapy a become a major o the habitually bus Harmon, who play sports in the same country and socce her high school ca had to cut back be injury.

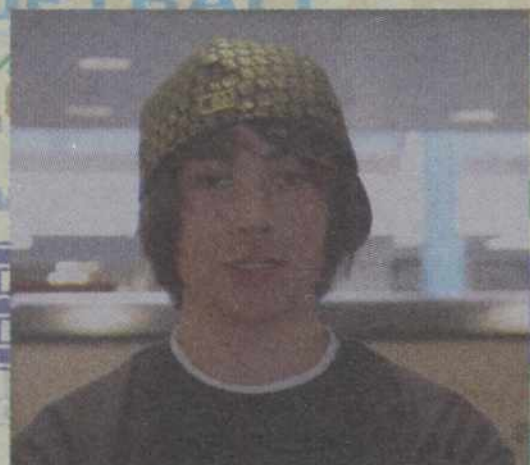
STUDENTS SPEAK OUT

Annie Oetken, senior



"Nothing's too competitive for me!"

Alex Vermillion, freshman



"No, not really. It's just a step up from recreational sports teams you play when you're younger. And it's just trying to prepare you for college sports, which is really intense."

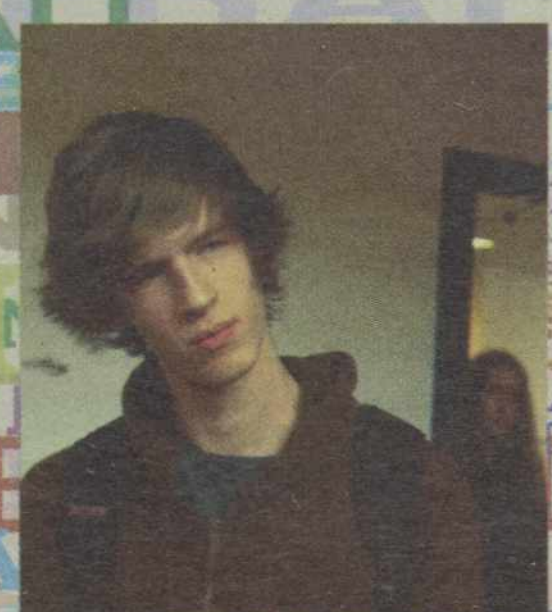
IS THERE TOO MUCH PRESSURE IN COMPETITIVE HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS?

Josie Sells, sophomore



"No, I enjoy being completely stressed out."

Dylan Stark, junior



"I think there is pressure, but it's good pressure."

Non-competitive sports options open

Competition makes a sport challenging. Team practices, additional training, mental preparation: the whole purpose is to beat the opposition.

However, some athletes find that less competition is more fun and more relaxing.

"Non-competitive sports are less stressful, and more fun," Christina Letsou, freshman, said.

So where does a person find sports activities that don't have the pressure of intense competition?

One place is intramural sports in school or private leagues. Intramural basketball at West Linn is in its current season with both boys and girls teams.

"We have two girls teams this year. We're hoping to have our two teams grow so maybe next year we have three or four," Rob Holstrom, Athletic Director said.

The no-cut policy which made multiple junior varsity sports teams possible were cut due to funding and facility scheduling problems according to Holstrom. This left students who enjoyed the less-competitive school teams to look for other

options.

Along with basketball, there are girls and boys intramural tennis leagues. These were started last year by Jamie LeVeque, Intramural Sports Coordinator.

Intramural sports are not



the only option. Athletes can train individually or participate in recreational leagues or classes.

Bike riding is a popular activity in Oregon, as Portland is touted as the bike-friendliest city in America. It is also one activity that doesn't require a fee to participate. Others include jogging, hiking, walking, swimming and outdoor rock climbing.

The City of West Linn offers low-cost community education classes and sports camps. Current offerings

include yoga, recreational volleyball, various forms of dance such as belly dancing, as well as recreational lacrosse, Irish dance, beginning snowshoeing, recreational soccer and beginning and advanced canoeing. Most community classes cost approximately \$45-60 and run for two to three months.

Golf courses abound in the Portland area, but a day at the greens can be costly, unless your visit is with a member, or you visit one of the public golf courses in the area.

To escape the pressures while still playing, getting a group of friends together to play football, basketball or frisbee is a good way to release stress while having fun.

"Playing in the Portland Futsal (like indoor soccer) league is great exercise, keeps you in shape, gets you out of the house, is fun and you get to meet new people," Wind Lothamer, technology teacher, said. "You also get to show how awesome you are, work on your skills and improve your ability as player."