



IT'S YOUR CALL

by Leslie Fossey

Tiger Woods. Mia Hamm. Tony Romo. No matter the sport, great names come to mind that provide inspiration to all of us. As a child, you can quickly remember those individuals in the world of sports that you modeled yourself after – either in dreams or on the field. Sports have been and will always be a part of our rich American culture, binding us together when we hear the cadence of the drums or the cheer of the crowd. And along with the spirit and excitement of the competition, it is important to remember the huge responsibility of caring for those who are playing the game.

Research has shown physical activity is not only important to our physical health, but also our emotional well-being, improving self-esteem, increasing strength, and providing an overall healthier lifestyle. This includes children of all ages, not just those in high school or collegiate level sports. With physical activity, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) says risks are involved: “High school athletes account for an estimated 2 million injuries, 500,000 doctor visits, and 30,000 hospitalizations annually.” According to Matthew Mayfield, M.D., Azalea’s Orthopedics pediatric orthopedist, “parents who have kids in sports, must understand the strenuous and potentially dangerous extremes required of children in competitive environment. A concern in sports today relates to the over-competitive environment

it comes to decisions that should be made involving young children, athletics, and health concerns. Patrick Wupperman, M.D., Azalea Orthopedic surgeon and sports medicine specialist shares, “Unless it is an acute injury, listen to your gut. If a child is limping at practice or complains of pains, it’s time to listen to your instincts.” Dr. Wupperman says that sometimes you don’t need a medical person to tell you what you already know. “Parents need to encourage and sometimes insist that a child sit out of P.E. or a sport for a few days to assess the situation,” says Dr. Wupperman.

Keeping your eye on the goal

Along with practicing good instincts, parents should become familiar with the following types of sports-related injuries that are common in a variety of sports:

- Acute injuries including bruising, strains and sprains up to broken bones and torn ligaments.
- Overuse injuries that occur from actions that place too much stress on developing bones and muscles; like tennis elbow and shin splints.
- Injuries that occur when an athlete returns to the sport before the prior injury has healed sufficiently.

Time Out for Parents

Do you promote a team-building philosophy at home and on the field? For example, while playing games in the backyard, or when watching your kids at practice. Do you encourage healthy living tips/nutrition at home? Do you help your child understand the risks/dangers of sports? Do you push your child too hard for his/her age? Are you trying to relive your childhood through your child – demanding too much? Do you encourage and teach good sportsmanship with your child?

If you have any orthopedic questions, visit Azalea Orthopedics website at www.azaleaorthopedics.com and click on the “Ask An Orthopedist” button and Dr. Kim Foreman, orthopedic surgeon, will answer your questions.

experienced by some parents and children. This can be created by misinformation, overzealousness, or expectations that are too high,” Dr. Mayfield says.

In today’s society parents and children are continually being bombarded with information and advice that can leave them feeling like they are in uncharted territory when

Dr. Wupperman adds, “Mom and dad need to make sure that the injury is healed completely before allowing the child to return to the sports activity. Not doing so can risk the same muscle group or another part of the body that has to compensate for the area that was injured leading to long-term injury.”