

Sports Medicine for Parents & Coaches

Daniel J. Boyle

Georgetown University Press (October 1999)

\$29.95 (117pp)

978-0-87840-732-3

After years spent playing sports and cheering on his own children, Boyle, a medical doctor, compiles the information learned in practice and on the field to aid parents and coaches before the child sets foot on the playing field, dance floor or practice mat. As Boyle states in his introduction : “In this era of managed care, a thorough explanation from the doctor is not often available to patients or their parents. This disappearing aspect of the art of medicine is particularly important when it involves the care of our children. This handbook will help fill that gap.” And it does.

Starting with general growth guidelines for children of different ages (Part 1, “Preparing Children for Sports Participation”), Boyle constantly admonishes parents and coaches, “Don’t impose your adult understanding of the sport on a nine-year-old.” At nine, a child is not the next Mark Maguire or Sammy Sosa and shouldn’t be expected to play at that level. Athletes are not born; they learn as they physically develop, and the way an adult plays a sport has no correlation to the way a child plays.

From basic preparations, such as a physical exam, to a year-round training schedule to maintain fitness for school sports, Boyle offers tips and concerns on issues faced by parents (Part 2, “Maintaining Good Physical Condition”). He covers the common injuries and treatments of blisters, bruises, sprains and strains, and also mentions more serious injuries like concussions, broken bones and transmittable diseases. Athletes lacking a “paired organ,” such as an eye or testicle, need to take different precautions to prevent the loss of the remaining organ (Part 3, “Treating Athletic Injuries”). Boyle’s strongest opposition is to athletes with HIV: “Anyone who is known to be HIV positive should be prohibited from playing contact and collision sports.”

An overview of “Sport-Specific Injuries” (Part 4) leads to the final practical advice (Part 5): what to pack in a medical bag. Inventive uses of Superglue to seal superficial wounds and Silly Putty to serve as ear plugs for swimmers are a few of the novel ideas showing Boyle is not rigid in his treatment methods. He uses whatever works.

His “Ten Commandments for Parents of Young Athletes” should be required reading for all parents and coaches before their child participates in a sport to alleviate consequences caused by unrealistic expectations.

With a detailed table of contents (faulted for its page numbering of only the five major parts of the book), a brief glossary of the specific medical terms used and basic illustrations of various injuries, Boyle provides a lucid, responsible guide to caring for the athletes of tomorrow.

MELANIE C. DUNCAN (September / October 1999)

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