"I Wish I Had This When I Started Coaching."

Bill Utsey, Director of Athletics, 25-Year Coach, Greenville County Schools, SC

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Recent articles in *The Chicago Tribune* and *Athletic Business* magazine express concerns about the future of high school-based sports as nonschool-based club programs gain in popularity across the country, particularly in the sports of basketball, swimming, volleyball, ice hockey and soccer.

Unquestionably, as the national leadership organization for education-based athletic and activity programs in the United States, the NFHS and its 51 member associations share those concerns, but perhaps for different reasons. By no means is this an epitaph because the most recent participation numbers belie any reports about a shift to nonschool-based programs.

The annual NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey is featured on page 18, and for the 19th consecutive year, the number of participants in high school athletics increased – this year by 86,471. An all-time high of 7,429,381 boys and girls participated in high school sports during the 2007-08 school year.

Assuming that there are more students attending high school each year, an annual increase in raw participation numbers could reasonably be expected, which the survey reveals to be occurring. However, even more impressive and more telling is the fact that the participation percentage rate among students is actually increasing as well. This year’s survey shows that 54.8 percent of students enrolled in high school participate in athletics – up from 54.2 percent a year ago. Young people find high school-based athletics more relevant than ever before.

Nonetheless, the growing interest by some high school students and their families in club sports should serve as a wake-up call to re-energize our education-based programs and continue the necessary funding to keep these one-of-a-kind programs alive. The United States is unique among all the countries in the world with regard to offering sports opportunities in an educational setting, and we need to do everything possible to make sure these doors remain open.

No doubt, the interest in club sports at the high school level is due in large part to the increased focus on specialization at a young age. Today, there are three-year-olds playing soccer and six-year-old girls playing hockey. Believe it or not, there is a boys 8-and-under national basketball tournament, and the basketball recruiting “experts” are ranking sixth-graders nationally. Why?

Part of the answer is overzealous parents who are trying to ensure a certain future for their sons and daughters. We wonder if these three- through eight-year-olds are having fun. And what happens to these kids by the time they reach high school? Many will lose interest in playing sports because of the overemphasis and singular focus on one sport. Some will fall prey to overuse injuries. And a very, very small minority will attain that valued college scholarship that was the parents’ dream in the beginning. The overwhelming majority, however, will spend more money for club sports than they ever regain through college scholarships, which by the way, mom and dad, come one year at a time.

So, how do we ensure that participation in high school sports continues to increase in the years to come? First and foremost, leaders in high schools nationwide – superintendents, school boards, building administrators – must continue to recognize the value of athletics programs and provide funding for as many young people as possible to participate. High school sports is about the opportunity to participate and learn; it is not about a singular focus on winning and “getting to the next level.” Second, the educational aspect of high school sports must be paramount. Coaches who receive training in areas other than Xs and Os of a sport, such as through the NFHS Coach Education program, will be able to impart valuable life lessons to student-athletes to prepare them for life after high school. This aspect truly sets high school-based sports apart from club sports.

Finally, high school sports should be fun. Surveys have shown that the No. 1 reason kids play sports is to have fun and be with their friends. Keith Jackson, former National Football League all-star tight end and a 2001 inductee in the National High School Hall of Fame, in his acceptance speech that year said, “There is no time like high school.”

We’ve never forgotten that statement that Keith made because it’s so true. It’s called community, and there’s nothing like it ever again. The friendships and memories last a lifetime. Thanks to all of you who are leaders in high school athletic and activity programs across this great nation. Keep up the good work. Keep the focus of our programs different from club-based sports. Keep it educational.
Great Shot

How Sweet It Is

Members of the Toledo (Ohio) St. Ursula Academy girls volleyball team celebrate after winning the 2004 Division I State Championship.

Photograph provided by 20/20 Photographic, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.
Welcome

We hope you enjoy this publication and welcome your feedback. You may contact Bruce Howard or John Gillis, editors of High School Today, at bhoward@nfhs.org or jgillis@nfhs.org.

Contents

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 2

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Presidential Candidates Benefited From High School Sports: Basketball and wrestling were sports of choice. –Bill Boyle

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National Federation of State High School Associations
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SURVEY RESULTS
Activities Lead to Success in Later Life: Top Canadian leaders say sports contributed to their career development. –Dr. Tim Berrett and John Paton

SPIRIT NEWS
Cheerleading Injury Rates Being Misreported: Risk minimization efforts yield reduction in injuries. –Jim Lord

PARTICIPATION SURVEY
High School Sports Participation Increases Again: All-time record number of boys and girls participating in high school sports. –John Gillis

LEGAL ISSUES
Behavior Policies for Athletes – Can They Be Enforced Legally?: Court cases show variety of challenges to behavior policies. –Lee Green

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES
Atlas & Athena: Recapturing the Healthy Mission of Sport: Program helps improve performances without drugs. –Melissa Durham

DEPARTMENTS
1 NFHS Report
Core Educational Values Missing in Club Sports

6 Quick Hits
Useful facts and information

12 Top High School Performances

16 Above and Beyond
Coaching Beyond the Field

20 Sports Medicine
Vocational Athletic Training: An Educational and Athletic Safety Solution

28 Did You Know?
• Rowing Difficulties Worth the Trouble
• Popularity of Rugby on the Rise

30 In the News
Around the Nation

Question: Does your state association offer music programs?

23 YES

28 NO

The Cost
HIGH SCHOOL MARCHING BAND UNIFORM

- Shako/Hat $50
- Gloves $5
- Bib Pants $60
- Socks $2
- Spats $6

Other Accessory Costs:
- Sashes $6
- Rainwear $25
- Garment Bags $12
- Shoe Bag $4
- Shako Box $8

- Jacket $247
- T-shirt $10
- Shoes $29

Total: $409

*These prices serve as approximate costs and are not intended to reflect any specific manufacturer’s prices. Also, these costs would not be annual costs since schools use some of this equipment for multiple years.
IT ALL STARTED HERE

Allyson Felix

American sprinter Allyson Felix was a high school track and field star at Los Angeles (California) Baptist High School from 2000 to 2003, before competing in both the 2004 and 2008 Summer Olympic Games. In the National High School Sports Record Book published by the NFHS, Felix still holds the national record in the 200-meter dash with a time of :22.52, set in 2003. She also ran the third-fastest time in that event with a time of :22.83 in 2002 and she is in a tie for ninth all time in the 100-meter dash, with a time of :11.29 in 2003. Felix won a silver medal in the 200-meter dash at both the 2004 Olympics in Athens and 2008 Olympics in Beijing, and won a gold medal in the 4x400-meter relay in Beijing. She also is a two-time World Outdoor 200-meter champion (2005 and 2007), a three-time United States Outdoor 200-meter champion (2004, 2005 and 2007) and a World Outdoor 4x100 and 4x400 gold medalist in 2007. 😊
In the halls of high schools across the country, two wonderful sports share the winter season: basketball and wrestling. Both require a unique set of skills. While they are very different from one another, both are a test of character and athletic skill. Mastery of both sports requires patience, hard work and more than a little talent.

Be careful how you answer the question – are you a wrestler or a basketball player? The answer to that simple question may say more about you than you realize.

Basketball is a uniquely American sport, a relative newcomer in the world of athletic competition. Despite its short history, basketball has swept the earth. It requires teamwork, precision, endurance and anticipation.

Wrestling has been contested for a much longer period of time, a sport identified by the Greeks and Romans as a test of character and athletic skill. It requires strength, tenacity, leverage and endurance.

The national debate that will culminate in the November 4 presidential election is between a former high school wrestler (John McCain) and a former high school basketball player (Barack Obama).

While both men have achieved great accomplishments since their days in high school, both trace the core principles that drive their lives to the lessons learned in the classrooms and playing fields of their youth.

John McCain entered Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia in 1951. As the son and grandson of Navy Admirals, McCain had been raised in the military and, as a result, had moved more than a dozen times. In his early years, McCain attended many schools in many areas, but he was able to spend his entire high school years at Episcopal High School.

At the time, Episcopal High School was a male-only boarding school that was known as a strict and stark institution. “The High School,” as it was known, was started by the Episcopal Church in 1839. Except for being closed for five years during the Civil War (when some buildings were used as hospitals for Union troops), the school has been in operation for the subsequent 169 years.

McCain was involved in a large number of activities at the school, both athletic and academic. He participated on the Maroon football, wrestling and tennis teams, where he earned a reputation for toughness and the willingness to get into a fight.
It was on the Episcopal High School wrestling team that McCain had the most success. He made a quick early impression, setting the school record for fastest pin in his sophomore year. He was known by a number of nicknames at the school, including “McNasty” and “The Punk.” As a senior, McCain tipped the scales in the 129-pound weight class.

The future senator also participated in a number of additional activities throughout his high school years, including the yearbook and newspaper clubs.

The high school yearbook entry for McCain says, “It was three fateful years ago that the ‘Punk’ first crossed the threshold of The High School. In this time he has become infamous as one of our top-flight wrestlers, lettering for two seasons. His magnetic personality has won for him many lifelong friends. But, as magnets must also repel, some have found him hard to get along with. John is remarkable for the amount of gray hair he has; this may come from his cramming for Annapolis or from his nocturnal perambulations. The Naval Academy is his future abode – we hope he will prosper.”

The lessons of discipline, self-control and endurance that are inherent in the sport of wrestling were put to use several years later, when McCain was shot down over Vietnam and spent several years in the North Vietnamese prisoner of war camp known as the “Hanoi Hilton.”

McCain refused offers of early release that were made because his father was the commander of all U.S. forces in Vietnam. He ended up languishing for 5½ years as a prisoner of war.

In addition to the wounds he suffered when he was shot down, McCain was tortured and mistreated during his time in the prison camp. To this day, the wounds he suffered in North Vietnam leave him unable to raise his arms above his head.

He returned to the United States a changed man and later attributed the strength he developed in the prison camp to the lessons learned at Episcopal High School.

In an April 2008 visit to Episcopal High School, McCain mentioned the school’s honor code. “If there is any reason for my success in life, it is because of what I learned at The High School, much of it through the Honor Code. I learned that character is what you are in the dark … I have been in the dark, not just in prison but also in my public life, and during those times and throughout my life, the principles of the Honor Code are the compass that I’ve tried to follow.”

McCain also mentioned an Episcopal High School English teacher, William Ravenel, as an important influence on his life. McCain referred to Ravenel as “one of the best men I have known” and added, “His influence in my life was more important and more benevolent than that of any person outside my family.”

Several years later, and on the opposite side of the sprawling nation, a young Barack Obama entered Punahou School in Honolulu, Hawaii as a fifth-grade student. Obama was born in Honolulu in 1961, and after his parents’ divorce, had spent several years in Indonesia with his mother and stepfather. He moved back to Hawaii and lived with his grandparents until he graduated from the school in 1979. He was known as Barry Obama in his years at Punahou.

Punahou School is a private school that was founded in 1841 by missionaries for the Congregational Church. With more than 3,700 students from kindergarten through the 12th grade, Punahou is the largest independent school in the United States.

Punahou is renowned for its academic excellence and its athletic teams. In fact, Sports Illustrated recently named Punahou as having the top-rated high school athletic program in the United States. The Buff ’n Blue at Punahou claimed 16 Hawaii state titles in the past school year alone.
Despite the fact that Punahou boasts a diverse and multi-cultural student body, Obama writes that he experienced some racial prejudice at the school. In fact, teasing on his first day at Punahou may have resulted in Barack deciding to be known as Barry at the school.

Obama was a reserve on the state championship Punahou boys basketball team in 1979. The forward was known for his dedication to the sport of basketball and earned the nickname “Barry O’Bomber” on the court. Now, nearly 30 years after graduation, Obama is still an enthusiastic fan and participant of basketball.

In addition to basketball, Obama was involved in many activities at Punahou, including the Literary Club.

In an essay for the Punahou Bulletin, published in 1999, two decades after his high school graduation, Obama wrote, “The opportunity that Hawaii offered – to experience a variety of cultures in a climate of mutual respect – became an integral part of my world view, and a basis for the values that I hold most dear.”

After graduation, Obama left the islands to pursue higher education. He still returns to Hawaii to visit family and friends. In August 2008, in the final days leading up to the Democratic National Convention, Obama vacationed for a week in Hawaii.

On August 12, he met a number of high school friends for a 90-minute game of basketball at Punahou. Afterwards, while meeting with faculty and friends at the school, he discussed the important impact on his life of two teachers at the school: Paula Kurashige and Eric Kusunoki.

Kurashige was the dean of the Punahou Class of 1979 and supervised the education of the 420 graduates of the class. She is set to retire this year after more than 40 years of service to the school and its students.

Kurashige has fond memories of Obama at the school, remembering that he was outgoing, had a wonderful smile, and was genuine and good-spirited. She said that the Punahou School is “wedded to the idea of community service” and is proud that Obama’s life has personified that concept.

“Our school president has a mantra that he repeats over and over, ‘To whom much is given much is expected,’” explains Kurashige. “I was delighted when Barry returned to the school several years ago and said basically the same thing to the students.”

Of Kusunoki, Obama has said, “Everything good I’ve done is because of Eric – everything bad – it’s because I didn’t listen to him.”

Kusunoki was Obama’s homeroom teacher during his four years at Punahou. He remembers Obama as wonderfully personable and well-liked. Kusunoki said he immediately recognized Obama when he returned to the school in August, “He has the same walk, the same smile and the same charisma that he had in high school,” Kusunoki said.

“It is hard to look at a child in high school and say he will be president,” Kusunoki said. “But I knew that he would be a success.”

Kusunoki recently started his 35th year of teaching at Punahou. He said that as a child at the school, he got up very early one morning to watch the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy and his Irish-Catholic teacher, Bernadette Manning, told the class, “One of you may become the President of the United States.”

“I’ve always remembered that experience, and I’ve shared it with my students through the years,” Kusunoki recounts. “Who knows – that experience may happen to one of my students!”

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Bill Boyle is editor and publisher of the San Juan Record in Monticello, Utah. He is also a member of the boards of the San Juan School District and the Utah High School Activities Association, and the High School Today Publications Committee.
A survey commissioned by the Alberta (Canada) Schools’ Athletic Association (ASAA) indicated that almost 80 percent of the province’s senior executives who responded participated in interschool sports, and more than one-half of those surveyed said school sports significantly or extensively contributed to their career development.

The ASAA surveyed Alberta’s top corporate chief executive officers and provincial officers (Member of the Legislative Assembly, MLA) to determine the extent to which those corporate and public leaders were engaged in high school sports and the perceived benefits that these individuals derived from their participation. The survey was mailed to Alberta’s 83 provincial officers and the senior executives of the province’s leading 146 corporations.

Of the 46 corporate executives and 46 provincial officers who responded, 78.3 percent indicated that they participated in high school sports and 100 percent graduated from high school. More than 54 percent indicated that this participation significantly assisted them in their career development.

While the results of this survey do not necessarily mean that all high school student-athletes are destined for the top of the corporate world or to enter public life, it certainly presents a compelling argument for support of interschool athletics and of the teacher-coaches and others who volunteer their time before and after school and on weekends to make sure Alberta’s high school students have the chance to participate in interscholastic athletics.

Since the normal participation rate of students in high school sports in the province is about 30 to 35 percent, the fact that 76.6 percent of CEOs and 80 percent of the provincial officers participated in high school sports offers strong support for the argument that high school sports involvement is a predictor of success in later life.

In addition to the connection between sports participation and career development, 48 percent of the respondents reported a significant or extensive complementary relationship between academics and school sport participation. Other benefits associated with involvement in high school sports cited by Alberta’s corporate and political leaders included physical fitness, promotion of lifelong activity, mental health, stress relief, friendship, having fun, development of character, personal growth, travel, fair play and acceptance of others.

Teamwork was the No. 1 skill learned through school sports according to the almost 100 respondents. Other skills derived through participation in sports were discipline, goal-setting, leadership, independence and self-confidence.

The most popular high school sports in which Alberta’s corporate and political leaders participated were track and field, basketball and football.

A complete copy of the survey information can be obtained on the ASAA Web site at www.asaa.ca.

John Paton has been executive director of the Alberta Schools’ Athletic Association for 15 years. He is a former physical education department head, athletic director and teacher-coach in his native Australia. He is past president of the Canadian School Sport Federation and represents that association on the NFHS Citizenship Committee.

Tim Berrett, Ph.D., works for Caminata Consulting, based in Edmonton, Alberta, and was involved in compiling the results of the ASAA survey. Berrett is a five-time Olympian in track and field and has held several coaching positions at community to university levels.
Multiple-sport Standout Sets Stolen Base Record

BY STEVE APPELHANS

The trend in high school sports is for student-athletes to specialize in a single sport. Someone forgot to tell that to Jennifer Jorgensen, who graduated last spring from Burnside (Iowa) Southeast Webster-Grand High School.

Jorgensen capped off an illustrious high school career, which included earning 17 letters in five different sports, by setting the national record for career stolen bases. Her 320 steals crushed the former record of 246, set by Kristy Roberts of Danville (Alabama) High School.

During the 2008 season, Jorgensen was a perfect 71-for-71 in stolen bases. In fact, she was only thrown out six times in her entire high school career, translating to a 98.2-percent success rate. She also finished her career with a .580 batting average, 275 runs scored and 46 wins as a pitcher.

As her 17 letters might suggest, stealing bases was not Jorgensen’s only prowess – her list of high school accolades is literally a page long. And that does not even include the national tumbling championship she won at age 9.

In softball, Jorgensen was a four-time Class 1A first-team All-State selection, three-time Class 1A Offensive Player of the Year and two-time Class 1A Player of the Year. In basketball, she was a three-time All-State selection by the Iowa Girls Coaches Association, set the Iowa single-season scoring record as a junior with 804 points and earned the distinction of being named 2008 Miss Iowa Basketball.

Not to be outdone by her softball and basketball accomplishments, Jorgensen was also a standout in track and volleyball. She won four state long jump championships and had multiple top-5 finishes at the state meet in various sprinting and hurdling events. In volleyball, she was a Class 1A second-team All-State performer in 2005.

Jorgensen is a rare breed – someone who can dominate at nearly any sport. Her father, Mike Jorgensen, who coached her in softball and basketball, credits her success to her ability to step up her play and make those around her better.

“She is an athlete that would take control of a game,” Mike Jorgensen said. “She raised the level of her teammates in both softball and basketball.”

For most high school stars, choosing a college is one of the hardest decisions they make. However, according to her father, Jorgensen’s most difficult decision was choosing which sport to play in college. In the end, the University of Pacific in California landed the 5-11 guard to play basketball.

It took awhile, but Jorgensen finally decided that she should follow the trend and specialize in one sport.

Richardson claims team state title single-handedly

BY JENNIFER SEARCY

For the first time, Rochelle (Texas) High School won the Texas University Interscholastic League Class 1A track and field state championship. The team was composed of one member – junior Bonnie Richardson.
Richardson had a combined team total of 42 points edging out her competition Chilton (Texas) High School with 36 points. She won both the high jump (5-feet-5) and the 200-meter dash (25.035), placed second in the long jump (18-7) and 100-meter dash (12.195), and placed third in the discus (121-0). 

Coach Jym Dennis expected some great achievements from Richardson going into the meet, but is proud of her for exceeding his expectations.

“I was hoping that she would medal in every event she was in, maybe win one or two of them,” Dennis said. “I even thought a title was a possibility, depending on how the relays would go.”

Richardson is a reluctant star, focusing on performing her best at each meet.

“She was excited to win, she probably hadn’t thought about winning the team title, but she doesn’t like all the attention she has been getting,” Dennis said. “She just likes to compete, to win and to do her best. After winning, she just wants to go back and do her normal thing.”

Richardson’s win also brought pride to her school. According to Dennis, this was the school’s first state title.

“The atmosphere is ecstatic around here,” Dennis said. “Rochelle has never won anything, teamwise, and to go in and win by herself was awesome. Both the school and the community have been very excited and they have supported her a lot.”

There aren’t any big plans in Richardson’s future, Dennis said. She just plans to continue running as a senior.

“Track is her thing,” Dennis said. “Next year, she will probably expect to win. She puts a lot of pressure on herself to win, and will probably try to repeat her success next year. It’s going to be tough, but I just tell her to have fun and go run.”

Jennifer Searcy was a spring intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department. She is a senior at Franklin (Indiana) College majoring in journalism news editorial and public relations.

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North Dakota running back stakes claim in record book

BY MATT VACHLON

Ellendale (North Dakota) High School running back Nate Arnold’s performance September 12 suggests that he’s capable of just about anything on the football field. 

The 6-0, 190-pound senior rushed 30 times for a national-record 550 yards and seven touchdowns in Ellendale’s 62-30 victory at South Border, a cooperative football program between the towns of Ashley and Wishek, in south-central North Dakota. His touchdown runs were of four, five, 15, 45 (twice), 63 and 69 yards. He also threw a 27-yard touchdown pass and made 15 tackles in the game from the middle linebacker position.

Despite the well-rounded effort, he will most be remembered for what he accomplished while running the football.

“It was a special night, a combination of things went well for us,” Ellendale head coach Rick Hack said. “Our offensive line played extremely well, Nate ran hard and we started with poor field position for most of the night, allowing him to have the big part of the field to rack up those yards.”

Arnold qualified in the top 10 nationally for three different categories of individual records for nine-player football, according to the 2008 National High School Sports Record Book. His rushing total shattered the previous record for most rushing yards in a game, which occurred in 2000 when Seth Walter rushed for 399 yards for Freeman (South Dakota) High School.

“We were all so surprised that he ran for that many yards,” Hack said. “We knew he was racking up yards, but you don’t ever think about something like that.”

Additionally, Arnold’s seven touchdowns move him into a three-way tie for first on the list for most rushing touchdowns in a game with Walter and Tony Pratt of Starbuck (Minnesota) High School, who first accomplished the feat in 1985. His 30 carries place him in a three-way tie for ninth on the list for most rushing attempts in a single game.

Arnold’s record-breaking performance isn’t likely to go to his head, though.

“Nate’s the type of kid where he doesn’t get too excited; he just took it in stride,” Hack said. “He was pretty much surprised by the amount. He’s a humble kid.”

Nine-player football is only played in North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota, according to the NFHS.

Matt Vachlon is a fall semester intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department. He is a senior at Butler (Indiana) University, majoring in journalism.
Cheerleading Injury Rates Being Misreported

BY JIM LORD

Cheerleading is one of the hot topics any time one starts a discussion about sports injuries, and understandably so. The number of articles about the dangers of cheerleading seems to be increasing, with recent headlines such as “Cheerleading Getting More Dangerous,” “Cheerleading Injuries Increasing” and even “Cheerleading is the Most Dangerous Sport.”

Unfortunately, these headlines are being written without a proper understanding of recent surveys and are simply not true. In fact, estimates by the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Advisors (AACCA) point to evidence of a reduction in the injury rates for cheerleading, in part due to an increased focus on risk minimization and coach education along with revised safety rules to help minimize catastrophic injuries.

The National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research (NCCSIR) shows that over the past 25 years, cheerleading accounts for about 67 percent of all catastrophic injuries to females. That statistic alone has captured the media’s attention, and it should be cause for further investigation. However, it doesn’t give the picture of the actual injury risk because it doesn’t include participation numbers.

When the participation figures are presented in the NCCSIR report, they are under-reported. The center uses statistics from the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) that were never intended to represent cheerleading participation, only those participants engaged in “competitive cheer.” Only 25 states responded to this portion of the survey and only 3,743 schools were represented, reporting participation by 95,177 participants.

Even in this reporting, without a clear definition of “competitive cheer,” respondents were free to make up their own minds as to whether their programs fit the category. This reported figure of 95,177 is the number used by the NCCSIR, and it is clearly lower than the actual participation figures for high school cheerleading.

With almost 19,000 high schools nationwide, the participation numbers for cheerleading are closer to 450,000, which is consistent with AACCA estimates. Combining the high school figures for the past five years, that would give an estimated injury rate of .70 per 100,000 – in line with other high school sports and certainly not the most dangerous sport. Also, cheerleading is a year-round activity, so in fairness, the rate should be cut in half to compare it to one-season sports.

In addition, catastrophic injuries were reduced from an abnormally high of 10 in the 2005-06 school year to two in the 2006-07 school year according to the report. The previous figures from school years ending in 2003, 2004 and 2005 were four, six and four, respectively.

Another report cites an increase in the number of emergency-room visits as an indicator that cheerleading is getting more dangerous. Studies of the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS), which uses sample emergency-room data to estimate national emergency-room visits, show a nearly 100-percent increase in cheerleading visits over a 12-year period ending in 2004. However, if the past five years of the study are used, the emergency-room visits are virtually flat for high school- and college-aged cheerleaders.

Considering that during the past 10 years cheerleading participation has increased dramatically in non-school, “all-star” programs, this points to a possible decrease in the actual injury rate for cheerleading. In fact, estimates are that there are now approximately 4,500 such programs across the country with an average of 100 participants apiece.

That being said, the issue of cheerleading safety should be at the top of any administrator’s or coach’s agenda. It is through recent safety awareness and emphasis on coach education that AACCA believes improvements in safety have been made.

The NFHS Spirit Coaches Education Program was developed by the NFHS Spirit Rules Committee in partnership with AACCA and summer training camp provider, Varsity Brands, and was released in 2002. The program, which includes educational components such as Coaching Principles, Spirit Program Management and the AACCA Safety Certification course, has given administrators and coaches a resource to help manage the risk inherent in the athletic activity that cheerleading has become.
Many states now require components of the NFHS Spirit Coaches Education Program. Most states require their coaches of any sport or athletic activity to have some type of coaching principles course as well as basic first aid and CPR. Twelve states now also require the AACCA Safety Course and many others strongly recommend it and make it available at state coaches conferences.

South Dakota was one of the first states in 2001 to require standard coaches education for their teams to participate in gymnastic moves, partner stunts or pyramids. Jo Auch, assistant executive director of the South Dakota High School Activities Association, notes that “We wanted our coaches to be better educated and prepared, so in doing some research for courses to help educate our coaches, we found that AACCA would give our coaches the best education and training we felt our coaches needed. It was adopted by our Board of Directors and has been a great asset for us as we continue to move this program forward.”

Several states – Alaska, Minnesota, Montana, Arizona and Florida – have followed suit recently, and Arkansas, Oregon and Maine will require safety certification by the start of the 2009-10 school year.

“Coaches education is the starting point for cheer safety,” said Susan Loomis, NFHS liaison to the Spirit Rules Committee. “Not having a coach who knows the rules and the proven safety procedures to follow is just asking for increased risk.”

Recent playing rules changes have also had an impact on the previous safety figures. The NFHS Spirit Rules Committee meets annually to review rules and make appropriate revisions. In the 2006-07 NFHS Spirit Rules Book, the committee required a mat to be used during the performance of specific advanced skills such as the basket toss. Rules such as these are important to lowering injury rates as well as the severity of injury, and it is vital that spirit coaches are well-versed and up-to-date with the most recent rules changes.

Like basketball and football, cheerleading contests have officials in place to enforce the rules. However, during a basketball or football contest where the cheerleaders are performing in a support role, there are no officials in place to ensure adherence to the cheerleading rules. Since there are countless more hours spent on sideline spirit-raising than cheerleading competition, the coach and administrator are often in the primary role of enforcing safety rules.

Finally, national numbers notwithstanding, the most important figures are those at the local level. What can administrators, coaches, parents and athletes do to continue the recent trend toward more safety in cheerleading? First, they must all recognize that cheerleading is athletic and that it needs the same level of support, attention and respect as other sports.

Administrators must take safety into consideration when assigning facilities and athletic training staff for cheerleaders. They must also provide the opportunity for ongoing coaches education.

Coaches must follow the standard of care with regard to rules, skill progressions and emergency procedures. They must also be aware of each individual’s readiness level and address safety concerns if they are raised.

Parents must realize that cheerleading has skill positions similar to other sports. There are positions for bases, tops and spotters, and they all play important roles on the team. Parents should support the decision of the coach and help their children gain the many benefits of athletic participation.

Finally, the cheerleader must recognize that there is risk in performing cheerleading skills and needs to take practice and performance seriously. Along with parents, they must know to refrain from attempting cheerleading skills without supervision, a common mantra in cheerleading known as “no coach, no practice.”

With a continued focus on safety awareness, coaches education and necessary rules changes, we expect the recent good news about cheerleading safety to continue.

For more information on the NFHS Spirit Coaches Education program, visit www.nfhs.org and select Spirit Education. For information on the AACCA Safety Course, visit www.aacca.org.

Jim Lord is the executive director of the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators. He has 25 years of experience in the cheerleading community and has spoken at more than 50 state, national and international cheerleading conferences. Lord is also a consultant to the NFHS Spirit Rules Committee and was the recipient of the NFHS Outstanding Service Award in 1998.
Coaching Beyond the Field

BY MATT VACHLON

When Curt Bladt was diagnosed with Miller-Fisher syndrome in 2004 and was in need of support, the response from the Harlan, Iowa, community was overwhelming.

After all, he has 321 wins (the fastest Iowa coach to 301), has the highest winning percentage all time among Iowa football coaches at .909, has won 10 state titles and has the best postseason record in Iowa football history (71-15). He also was inducted into the Iowa High School Athletic Association Hall of Fame in 1993, was named National High School Football Coach of the Year in 2006, has had more than 200 players named to all-state teams and began his 31st season as head football coach at Harlan Community High School this fall.

But the one million hits and hundreds of thousands of messages that he received on his Web site during his month-long stay in the hospital were for more than just being a successful football coach. To the Harlan community, he has been a science and health teacher, an assistant wrestling and track coach and, most importantly, a shoulder to lean on when needed. And for the actions that he took on October 2, 2006, he was selected as a 2008 National High School Spirit of Sport Award section winner by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

During a junior varsity football game against Perry (Iowa) High School, Perry sophomore quarterback Ian Burke took a hit from behind while planting to throw a pass. The result was a dislocated femur that required immediate surgery. The game was immediately cancelled and the player was taken to the hospital.

“IT was a bad situation because the team wasn’t very good and as a result they had a shaky offensive line,” Bladt said. “For that reason, the boy’s dad didn’t really want him to play quarterback and unfortunately he got hurt.”

Although the game was over, Bladt’s night was just beginning. He immediately went to the hospital to stay with Ian until his family arrived. When the player went in for surgery, Bladt stayed with his family and the team until midnight. He even convinced a local establishment to provide the rest of the team with sodas while they waited. Bladt was back at 8 a.m. the next morning to check in again.

“This is my 31st year as head coach, along with 10 more as an assistant, and I think that an injury is the toughest thing for a young athlete to handle,” Bladt said. “They commit and put in so much hard work and then they end up getting hurt.”

Bladt said that staying with Burke was not unusual for himself or his staff. He said that when they are playing at home and someone goes to Harlan’s hospital, either he or an assistant will call to make sure everything is OK. If the injury is serious, then he or that coach will go to the hospital to stay with the player or his family.

Bladt also knows from his own experience how nerve-wracking a stay in the hospital can be.

Miller-Fisher’s syndrome is a rare acquired nerve disease that is considered a variant of Guillain-Barré syndrome. Thus, Bladt experienced symptoms such as double vision and loss of taste and smell as his body began to experience paralysis as the result of his im-
mune system attacking his body due to the presence of a unique antibody.

Once diagnosed, Bladt spent a month in the hospital to remove the antibodies and eventually made a full recovery. During that time, he said that he had tremendous gratitude toward his wife for sticking by his side and for all the messages sent to him through a Web site that was created by his daughters-in-law to keep people updated on his status.

“My wife read me the messages while I was in the hospital,” Bladt said. “There were messages from China, South America, Europe and Iraq. I never realized where people from 20 or 30 years ago would end up and it was nice to know that they still cared.”

Following the surgery, Bladt called Burke’s home from time to time to check up. He simply chalked it up to providing a shoulder in a time of need. He hasn’t called recently though, because things have been going better.

“He’s doing well,” Bladt said. “He’s back and being active again, although he probably won’t be a football player anymore.”

Being there for other people seems to be in Bladt’s blood. That’s why he’s been a coach for more than 40 years, counting the time that he has spent as an assistant.

“I just enjoy coaching in general,” Bladt said. “Coaching is really fun. On Friday night, you see everyone in the stands, you hear the band, there’s excitement in the air. I enjoy trying to make things fun and teaching kids to learn about themselves, their teammates and the people around them – to teach them to be team players, something that they can apply later in life.”

It’s a trait for which Burke’s father, Robert, is forever grateful.

“I cannot thank enough the coaches, the doctors and staff at the hospital and all the people in Harlan, especially coach Bladt,” Robert said. “They have shown nothing but tremendous class and kindness throughout the whole thing. It is no wonder they have the kind of tradition they have.”

Matt Vachlon is a fall semester intern for the NFHS Publications/Communications Department. He is a senior at Butler (Indiana) University, majoring in journalism.
For the 19th consecutive year, the number of student participants in high school athletics increased in 2007-08, according to the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

Based on figures from the 50 state high school athletic/activity associations, plus the District of Columbia, that are members of the NFHS, participation for the 2007-08 school year set an all-time high of 7,429,381, according to the 2007-08 High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. In addition, boys and girls participation figures reached all-time highs, with 3,057,266 girls and 4,372,115 boys participating in 2007-08. The girls figure surpassed the total of 3,021,807 set last year, while the boys figure eclipsed the former record of 4,367,442 set in 1977-78.

Through the survey, it was also determined that 54.8 percent of students enrolled in high schools participate in athletics.

“This is certainly another great report on the interest of high school sports in our nation’s schools,” said NFHS Executive Director Robert F. Kanaby. “The fact that we experienced all-time records for both girls and boys reflects the fact that the high school sports participation experience is more viable than ever and is of

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### TEN MOST POPULAR BOYS PROGRAMS

**Schools**

1. Basketball ............................................................17,861
2. Track and Field – Outdoor .......................................15,835
3. Baseball ..................................................................15,720
4. Football – 11-player ...............................................13,987
5. Golf .................................................................13,647
6. Cross Country ......................................................13,485
7. Soccer ...................................................................11,122
8. Wrestling ...........................................................10,090
9. Tennis .................................................................9,576
10. Swimming and Diving ...........................................6,428

**Participants**

1. Football – 11-player .................................................1,108,286
2. Basketball ..................................................................552,935
3. Track and Field – Outdoor .......................................548,821
4. Baseball ..................................................................478,029
5. Soccer ...................................................................383,561
6. Wrestling ...............................................................259,688
7. Cross Country .......................................................221,109
8. Golf .......................................................................159,958
9. Tennis .................................................................156,285
10. Swimming and Diving .............................................111,896

### TEN MOST POPULAR GIRLS PROGRAMS

**Schools**

1. Basketball ............................................................17,564
2. Track and Field – Outdoor .......................................15,772
3. Volleyball ..............................................................15,009
4. Softball – Fast Pitch ...............................................14,846
5. Cross Country ......................................................13,294
6. Soccer .................................................................10,543
7. Tennis ................................................................. 9,694
8. Golf .........................................................................9,447
9. Swimming and Diving .............................................6,766
10. Competitive Spirit Squads ......................................4,510

**Participants**

1. Basketball ..............................................................449,450
2. Track and Field – Outdoor .......................................447,520
3. Volleyball .............................................................397,968
4. Softball – Fast Pitch ...............................................371,293
5. Soccer ...................................................................346,545
6. Cross Country .......................................................190,349
7. Tennis .................................................................172,455
8. Swimming and Diving .............................................147,197
9. Competitive Spirit Squads ......................................111,307
10. Golf ................................................................. 69,243
great interest to our nation’s young people. In addition, the results support the NFHS 2008-2011 Strategic Plan, in which the organization committed to providing stronger leadership and support for high school athletics and fine arts activities.”

Two years ago, the NFHS began a new brand identity emphasis using a communications tag line of “Take Part. Get Set For Life.” In addition to its chief task of writing playing rules for high school sports, the NFHS is striving to gain awareness and support from state and local governments, media, corporate partners, and especially students and their parents.

Competitive spirit squads gained the most female participants in 2007-08 with 16,130, followed by soccer with 8,913 and cross country with 6,973.

Lacrosse gained the most participants among boys sports in 2007-08 with 11,336, followed by soccer with 5,562, swimming and diving with 5,158 and cross country with 5,042.

In terms of combined participation, the emerging sports of bowling and lacrosse continued their rise in popularity with significant percentage increases. Overall participation in bowling increased 17 percent, while lacrosse participation was up 14 percent.

Basketball remained the most popular sport for girls with 449,450 participants, followed by outdoor track and field (447,520), volleyball (397,968), fast pitch softball (371,293), soccer (346,545), cross country (190,349), tennis (172,455), swimming and diving (147,197), competitive spirit squads (111,307) and golf (69,243).

In boys sports, 11-player football once again topped the list with 1,108,286 participants, followed by basketball (552,935), outdoor track and field (548,821), baseball (478,029), soccer (383,561), wrestling (259,688), cross country (221,109), golf (159,958), tennis (156,285) and swimming and diving (111,896).

Texas held its title as having the most sports participants with 779,049, followed by California (735,497), New York (380,870), Ohio (346,571), Illinois (336,646), Michigan (315,734), Pennsylvania (286,992), New Jersey (256,837), Minnesota (230,068) and Florida (227,157).

The participation survey has been compiled since 1971 by the NFHS through numbers it receives from its member associations. The complete 2007-08 Participation Survey is available on the NFHS Web site <www.nfhs.org>.

John Gillis is an assistant director of the National Federation of State High School Associations and co-editor of High School Today.
Superintendents and high school principals are always looking to provide more opportunities for their students, as well as create a safer school environment. However, the reality of school funding many times proves to be a major obstacle to even the best of intentions. Many high school administrators have found that they can provide more educational opportunities for their students AND provide improved safety for their student-athletes at the same time.

Careers in health care, personal fitness and sports medicine have been gaining in popularity and need over the past decade. As the “boomers” and their children participate in physical activities more often and into later years, the need and interest in these careers continues to expand.

A growing number of students interested in athletic-related health careers are seeking ways to assist high school athletic teams as “student-trainers.” These students are eager to participate in athletics in some fashion but also express an interest in pursuing a career in sports medicine. Like any school activity program, these students need guidance and mentoring, but more importantly they need a suitable education in the field of sports medicine at the secondary level. They need to be taught the skills and information appropriate for their age and understanding.

One fast-growing education component in the secondary school setting is that of sports medicine programs under the umbrella of Career and Technical Education. Career and Technical Education Sports Medicine is a program that can meet both the curricular needs for a high school principal wishing to expand his or her educational offerings and fulfill the educational desires of those students wanting to explore sports medicine as a career.

School administrators face many problems on a daily basis; it is greatly appreciated when these problems are accompanied by a possible solution. Expanding the Career and Technical Education Health Professions Program in their school or district to include a sports medicine course by utilizing funding from the Carl Perkins Act in conjunction with the individual state’s Professional Technical or Career and Technical Education departments, may provide that solution. It must be pointed out that Perkins moneys are not to be used to hire personnel, but rather expand the technical educational opportunities afforded to students. Schools are in the business of education and Perkins funding helps expand educational opportunities for students in technical fields.

There are 16 national career clusters supported by the States’ Career Cluster Initiative (SCCI) that can be funded by Perkins. High school sports medicine falls under the umbrella of the health science career cluster and Therapeutic Services Pathway. Health Professions Sports Medicine Programs provide the basic fundamental knowledge and skills for a student to become a high school athletic training student aide, working under the supervision of a certified athletic trainer.

Unlike other Career and Technical education courses, students who complete the coursework required by a Health Professions Sports Medicine curriculum are not allowed to go out and actively seek employment as an athletic trainer.

The purpose of the High School Health Professions Sports Medicine program is to introduce students to the skills and knowledge
used in the fields of sports medicine/athletic training. The content often includes, but is not limited to, roles and responsibilities of team members, emergency and non-emergency procedures, anatomy and physiology, sports injuries, equipment, principals of modalities, rehabilitation, injury and disease prevention, as well as protective equipment. Basic skills such as first aid, CPR, AED use, taping and stretching – vital in any sports medicine program – are taught and supervised by a certified athletic trainer.

Once taught and mastered, these students can help the certified athletic trainer assist athletes before, during and after practices and games. The program can provide excellent background for continuation in postsecondary-level health and medical occupation programs and approved athletic training programs. Under no circumstances are high school students allowed, nor is it implied, that they perform the duties of a certified athletic trainer as determined by state regulations.

Certified athletic trainers can be hired to teach these courses because they hold the necessary credentials (a bachelor’s degree in sports medicine from an approved program, national certification, and in states that require it, state licensure) to teach the course. The certified athletic trainer will be able to assist athletic training student aides with skills development as they collectively work within the athletic department. In addition, they can provide the health care expertise for athletics as well as supervise their athletic training student aides as they practice the hands-on skills taught in class and make connections to the academic content.

Perkins funding cannot be expected to sustain a program. Perkins is “soft money” in that as priorities and authorizations at both the federal and state levels change, the level of funding will rise and fall. Perkins can help with the costly educational materials, equipment and supplies needed to run a successful Health Professions Sports Medicine Program.

The ultimate goal when offering a Health Professions Sports Medicine Program is to expand the educational opportunities of the high school student. Because these skills need to be practiced and high school student aides need to be supervised by an instructor knowledgeable in sports medicine, a certified athletic trainer is a logical choice. School districts should contact their respective State Career and Technical Education departments if they are interested in expanding their health professions program to include a sports medicine component. Creative thinking will not only provide greater educational opportunities for students, but will also provide a safer environment for student-athletes as well.

Tony Fitzpatrick is a certified athletic trainer with 21 years of experience. He is the Head Athletic Trainer and teacher at Timberline High School in Boise, Idaho. He may be contacted at tony.fitzpatrick@boiseschools.org.
Behavior Policies for Athletes – Can They Be Enforced Legally?

BY LEE GREEN

Background

In recent years, both the content and implementation of student-athlete behavior policies have been challenged in court on a variety of grounds. The policies in question generally establish rules for student-athletes regarding academic performance, conduct during practices and games, the use of alcohol and drugs, standards related to grooming and dress, and other aspects of behavior associated with sport and school. Generally, the grounds on which student-athlete behavior policies have been challenged fall into five general categories.

First, the student-athlete suspended from athletics participation often asserts that his or her due process rights have been violated. The basis of this constitutional argument is a claim by the student-athlete that participation in school sports is a property right and that both procedural and substantive due process is mandated before any deprivation of that property right occurs.

Second, behavior policies are often challenged using another constitutional argument – the assertion of an equal protection violation. In such cases, the suspended student-athlete claims that the code of conduct in school sports is a property right and that both procedural and substantive due process is mandated before any deprivation of that property right occurs.

Third, student-athlete behavior policies are consistently challenged for allegedly containing provisions that are unreasonable or arbitrary. This non-constitutional issue, rooted in administrative law standards for determining the validity of school rules and regulations, requires an analysis as to whether the specific component of the policy that resulted in the suspension of a student-athlete is rationally related to the effective operation of the school or its athletics program. If violation by a student-athlete of the code of conduct would have no detrimental effect on the mission and goals of the school or its athletics program, the policy generally is considered arbitrary and unreasonable.

Fourth, rules and regulations governing conduct may implicate constitutional issues of student free speech, free expression and free association. The student-athlete who is suspended from athletics participation for violating grooming or dress standards, or wearing a prohibited tattoo, or posting banned materials on a social networking Web site, or being present at a party where others are drinking alcohol will often use the First Amendment’s Free Speech Clause or Free Association Clause as his or her basis for challenging the school’s actions.

Finally, the fifth basis for challenge of student-athlete codes of conduct is one that appears in those cases where the suspended student-athlete suffers from some form of disability and argues that the Americans With Disabilities Act and related disability legislation mandates that an exception should be made to the behavior policy because of the individual’s disability.

Case Law

In a 1988 case, Palmer v. Merluzzi, a U.S. District Court evaluated the claim by a high school football player that his suspension from athletics participation violated his constitutional rights related to due process and equal protection. The basis for the challenge is a claim that the suspension was arbitrary and unreasonable.

Daniel Palmer was a starting wide receiver on the Flemington (New Jersey) Hunterdon Central High School varsity football team. Related to his enrollment in a broadcasting course, he also worked at the high school radio station. After the discovery of evidence of beer consumption and marijuana use on school grounds at the radio station, Palmer admitted his involvement to school administrators. In addition to a 10-day suspension from school, Palmer was suspended from all activities, including his participation on the football team, for 60 days.

In his federal lawsuit against the school district, Palmer first alleged that his due process rights had been violated when he had been suspended from activities without proper notice and a hearing. In evaluating the claim, the U.S. District Court stated “the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits state action which deprives “any person of life, liberty, or property
Palmer’s second claim was that his equal protection rights had been violated because no other student had ever received a penalty of equal magnitude for the offense in question. On this issue, the District Court concluded that “Palmer’s suspension was rationally related to enforcing the legitimate goal of ensuring compliance with school drug policy” and that “even severe penalties on student extracurricular participation do not violate principles of equal protection where the penalties are pursuant to legitimate school goals and are not discriminatory in nature” (do not disproportionally impact students of particular races, ethnic origins or religions).

Palmer’s third claim was the non-constitutional, administrative law argument that the school’s behavior policy and its specific application to his situation were arbitrary and capricious. On this issue, the District Court found that “while the penalty was severe, it reflected an approach to dealing with a complex social problem that is not irrational. Palmer’s argument that defendant’s conduct was arbitrary and capricious … is without merit.” The court’s decision reflects the deference that courts nationwide generally accord to student codes of conduct so long as those policies are rationally related to legitimate educational goals and the effective operation of the school.

In a 2002 case, Killion v. Franklin Regional School District, a Pennsylvania high school student was suspended from athletics participation after he created his own version of a David Letterman-like Top Ten List which “dissed” the school’s director of athletics. The list was created by the student at his home on his private computer and was distributed to his friends through e-mails to their homes. Hard copies of the list eventually made their way to the school via third-hand and fourth-hand recipients of the e-mail version.

The student filed suit in United States District Court challenging his suspension on free speech grounds. The District Court, although recognizing that schools may regulate student speech if it is school-sponsored (e.g. the student newspaper) or disrupts the educational process (e.g. actual disruption on school property), held that the suspension violated the student-athlete’s freedom of speech as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Because the list was not created on school property or distributed via school computers and because the list in no way disrupted the educational process, the District Court concluded that there was an insufficient connection for the school to have jurisdiction to regulate the speech in question.

The Killion case illustrates that courts will strictly scrutinize any attempt by schools and athletics programs, including the use of provisions in codes of conduct, to regulate purely off-campus speech by student-athletes. Although cases dealing with free speech issues related to student postings on social networking Web sites such as MySpace or Facebook have not yet been decided at the level of state Supreme Courts or U.S. Courts of Appeal, the Killion case indicates that regulation by schools of purely off-schoolgrounds conduct may be legally suspect.

Finally, numerous cases have established the principle that codes of conduct will be applied to student-athletes with disabilities in the same manner as such policies are applied to all student-athletes. In Maine School Administrative District No. 1, an administrative law case heard by the U.S. Office for Civil Rights in 2002, the OCR upheld the dismissal of a student with a learning disability from his basketball team for violating team rules regarding attendance at practice sessions, ruling that students with disabilities are not exempt from codes of conduct, so long as there is not a direct causal connection between the disability in question and the failure to comply with team rules. Similarly, in Shelby County Alabama School District, another 2002 OCR decision, the agency upheld the dismissal from the volleyball team for bad behavior of a student with learning disabilities because her disabilities were unrelated to the bad behavior and similar penalties had been imposed on other players in the past for similar offenses. Such cases illustrate that student-athletes with disabilities are not exempt from the mandates of codes of conduct as long as those policies are applied in a non-discriminatory manner.

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Lee Green is an attorney and a professor at Baker University in Baldwin City, Kansas, where he teaches courses in sports law, business law and constitutional law. He may be contacted at Lee.Green@BakerU.Edu.
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February 7-8, 2009
at the Walt Disney World, Resort and nationally televised on ESPN and ESPN2
Teen athletes want to get faster and stronger, but many do not know how to do it the natural way. With support from the National Football League (NFL), many young athletes are learning what to eat and how to train in order to become better athletes without using steroids or performance-enhancing substances.

In San Diego, California, one softball player was surprised to learn that fruit is primarily a carbohydrate. Another athlete, this time a football player, clearly looked disappointed when he learned that French fries were high in fat. Then, when he read aloud that side-effects of steroid use for men include acne, baldness and most notably, shrunken testicles, all of his friends laughed! These particular student-athletes are pioneers for their sport teams. They are engaged in a new initiative, funded by the NFL’s Youth Football Fund and sponsored by several NFL teams.

**ATLAS and ATHENA make a strong team!**

The NFL ATLAS & ATHENA Schools Program consists of a network of high schools across the country. Selected athletic directors, coaches and student-athlete leaders attended an all-day training at their local NFL team’s training facility or stadium. ATLAS (Athletes Training & Learning to Avoid Steroids) for boys and ATHENA (Athletes Targeting Healthy Exercise & Nutrition) for girls are two gender-specific, evidence-based drug prevention and health promotion programs for high school sport teams. All participants received a team co-branded T-shirt, water bottle and raffle ticket for prizes donated by the NFL teams. Coaches and trained squad leaders then went back to their schools and began leading Atlas and Athena with their teams.

The teams met once per week for 45 minutes for each session (10 for Atlas; 8 for Athena). Both programs are scripted and the student-athletes do most of the teaching. The coach keeps the young athletes on task and the curriculum is easy to follow. Activities include role plays, educational games and creating public-service announcements. Athletes learn what to eat before a workout, what to eat after a workout and how to get stronger with different strength-training techniques. In addition, athletes set goals and monitor their protein intake.

Rather than stress the long term effects of anabolic steroids, diet pills, alcohol and marijuana, the immediate effects on athletic potential are presented, such as the message that alcohol is a muscle toxin, marijuana can reduce coordination and anabolic steroids can cause acne, shrink testicles (males) and cause facial hair (females). Participants also learn to be cautious with supplements because of the lack of government oversight in ensuring product purity and safety.

**Studied and Proven Effective**

Atlas and Athena were developed by Drs. Linn Goldberg and Diane Elliot, two practicing physicians and professors at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland. Study outcomes have been published in peer-reviewed journals and may be accessed from the Web site: [http://www.ohsu.edu/hpsm/library.cfm](http://www.ohsu.edu/hpsm/library.cfm).

Atlas and Athena have received prestigious awards and are listed in The National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices. Both were recently cited as the only effective steroid prevention programs by the Government Accountability Office report in November 2007. Congressman Tom Davis, ranking member of
the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, said, “The Atlas and Athena programs – gender-specific, student-led programs aimed specifically at discouraging steroid abuse – were shown to reduce not only steroid use but a variety of risky behaviors, including recreational drug use, teen sex and driving while drunk.”

Students Insist on Healthier Foods

Dr. Hamid Azimiraghi, athletic director at Soldan International Studies High School in St. Louis, Missouri, reported that a few young female athletes met with their principal and cafeteria manager to request healthier menu items. They were successful in starting a salad bar during lunch. They also chose to ban all sales of candy as fundraisers to be consistent with the lessons learned in Athena. Dr. Azimiraghi was proud of his students for insisting on healthier food choices for themselves and their community.

Luther Leonard, quarterback from Evergreen High School in Washington, said that his football team stopped drinking Rockstar after going through Atlas. “We all drink water or Gatorade now.” When asked if he thought any of his teammates would be tempted to use steroids, he said, “NO WAY!” These changes were recognized by the NFL and sponsorship will continue.

Education vs. Drug Testing

Schools in 31 states have purchased the programs and implemented Atlas and Athena with their sport teams or in their health classes. For the past three years, the Plano Independent School District in Texas has implemented the programs with their sport teams. During the first year, their entire athlete population participated. Now each year, all of their freshman teams participate.

Drug testing is a strategy to prevent drug use in sports, and has been used in the Olympics for more than 30 years. Some school administrators are conducting randomized drug testing for middle and high school athletes. Unfortunately, student-athlete drug testing has never shown to reduce drug use, unlike the proven effects of educational programs. The only rigorous evaluation of randomized student-athlete drug and alcohol testing was published in the Journal of Adolescent Health (November 2007).

This two-year study could not find any reduction in past 30-day drug or drug and alcohol use. Importantly, risk factors that could potentially increase future drug and alcohol use were found among the students who were in the drug-testing schools. Thus, the authors cautioned that more research is needed before drug and alcohol testing is considered an effective deterrent for school-based athletes.

Leaders across the country encourage use of educational programs. Jack Roberts, executive director of the Michigan High School Athletic Association, said, “ATLAS and ATHENA have proven to reduce use of performance-enhancing drugs and also to significantly reduce other risky behaviors and to increase healthier choices.” He concluded, “This is where our resources are needed – not testing for a few performance-enhancing drugs which is not even in the top ten list of drug problems facing adolescents, but teaching many of our students to make better decisions for sports and ultimately for life.”

Similarly, Tom Welter, Oregon School Activities Association’s executive director, stated, “If we truly believe in education, then we need to use programs like ATLAS and ATHENA to effectively prevent substance use. These programs change behavior, not only knowledge, and they are inexpensive.”

Professional Athletes Don’t Help the Situation

Revelations of drug-using, high-profile athletes such as Marion Jones and Floyd Landis are discouraging. Their decisions can impact young athletes who learn that their sports heroes resorted to cheating to compete. The message seems to say, “You can become a winner and be famous if you use steroids. If you don’t, you can’t excel.”

Young athletes want to know how to become more competitive. Every student that we spoke to on our tour of NFL Schools recommended ATLAS and ATHENA for other student-athletes. Many don’t receive this information in health class and participating in ATLAS and ATHENA made them feel like they were doing something that could give them a competitive edge, the natural way.

For more information about ATLAS and ATHENA, please visit www.atlasathena.com.

Melissa Durham is on the staff of the Division of Health Promotion and Sports Medicine at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, Oregon. She can be contacted at durham.mb@gmail.com.
For many high school students, the thought of rowing as a high school sport is a foreign concept. However, for those schools that offer the sport, crew has become a staple of their athletic programs.

Crew, while not a heavily sponsored sport, has more than 5,000 dedicated high school participants annually—a number that continues to slowly, but steadily, increase each year. For example, Atlantic City (New Jersey) High School Athletic Director Frank Campo explained that 10 years ago, only three schools in Atlantic City’s conference offered crew. That number has grown to 10 schools this year.

The fact that high school crew programs are being added somewhat defies logic given the inherent difficulties of the sport.

A problem preventing many schools from offering crew is simple geography. Schools need a body of water for practice and competition that is close to the school. The lack of appropriate bodies of water limits potential crew programs.

Additionally, since interscholastic crew programs are limited, schools are many times forced to drive long distances for competition. Campo noted that most of Atlantic City’s competitions were between 45 and 60 minutes away from the school.

Along with these difficulties, financial problems can also derail a potential crew program. Schools have to generate money for boats, a boathouse, dues and entry fees. Not only do schools need boats for competition, but they need to have a motorboat for the coach as well.

Campo estimated that Atlantic City, who also has a $1 million boathouse, spent nearly $7,000 on dues and entry fees for crew alone last school year. The school paid less than $3,000 in dues and fees for all of their other sports combined.

In order to cope with these financial difficulties, crew programs are forced to look for ways to cut costs or raise money. For many, this means extensive fundraising. For others, it means being in the right place at the right time.

Sebastian (Florida) River High School began its crew program three years ago after receiving two used boats as donations. Since then, members of the crew team and athletic department have done fundraising to purchase additional boats and build a boathouse.

The reality is that many athletic directors with crew programs believe it is worth the trouble of having crew and would like to see the sport continue to grow. Given that most crew teams have eight-person crews and four-person crews working in unison, rowing offers valuable lessons in cooperation, hard work and dedication.

“I watched what my niece got out of rowing and how much her parents got into it,” said Michael Stutzke, athletic director at Sebastian River, “and I knew that was something I wanted to bring to Sebastian River.”

Steve Appelhans was a summer intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and is currently a graduate student at the University of New Haven (Connecticut).
Popularity of Rugby on the Rise

BY STEVE APPELHANS

With football season in full swing, more than one million high school students are taking to the gridiron daily. But in Sebastian, Florida, a group of first-timers are tackling a “new” sport—a close relative of football. The sport, which is wildly popular in both Australia and Europe, is rugby.

This fall, Sebastian River High School began the first high school varsity girls rugby program in the nation—the first of its kind for boys or girls. With its rich history in offering non-traditional high school sports such as bowling and crew, it is no surprise that Sebastian River became the first school to sponsor the sport. Sebastian River Athletic Director Michael Stutzke believes it is only a matter of time before other schools begin to follow.

“I don’t think it will take long at all [for other schools to offer varsity girls rugby],” Stutzke said. “Once the exposure is out there, we will serve as a template for other programs.”

For now, Sebastian River plays games against club teams in the area, which— unlike the Sebastian River varsity team—are composed of girls from different schools.

Florida is not the only place that rugby is catching on. Over the past eight years, rugby’s popularity in the Charlotte, North Carolina, area has grown exponentially. An organization, Carolina Youth Rugby, was even started to help the sport progress. Currently, 22 club teams and around 400 students in Charlotte are participating.

Carolina Youth Rugby President Neil Aldridge hopes that more schools consider adding rugby so that it will be recognized by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) as an official high school sport. The NCHSAA requires participation from 25 percent of the state’s public high schools to sanction a sport. Concern about rugby is the physical nature of the sport. Like football, rugby involves juiking, tackling and punting, but one glance reveals a striking difference: no pads. That fact has likely hindered the sport from gaining popularity in the United States, especially at the high school level, because it seems probable for injuries to occur.

However, according to a study by the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children’s Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, the injury rate for high school rugby players is similar to those of football players and wrestlers, and lower than the rate of injury for ice hockey players. Researchers noted that teaching proper technique, adequate physical preparation and preventative officiating help to make rugby as safe as possible.

The addition of rugby programs serves as an opportunity to get more students involved in high school activities, especially those students looking to try something different.

“Rugby provides the opportunity to be involved in a new sport where an established skill set doesn’t have to be there. Students who had not previously been in athletics are getting involved,” Stutzke said.
The annual report of catastrophic sports injuries at the high school level indicated a total of 53 catastrophic injuries for the 2006-07 season, which was up from 2005-06 but similar to other years during the 25-year history of the survey.

The National Center for Catastrophic Sports Injury (NCCSI) Research was started in 1982 to monitor injury trends in high school and college athletics. The NCCSI is headed by Frederick O. Mueller, Ph.D., from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Direct injuries are those that are directly related to participation in the actual skills of the sport whereas indirect injuries involve a systemic body failure on the athletic field or court, such as heatstroke or heart-related problems.

During the 2006-07 season, there were 34 catastrophic injuries in fall sports (20 direct, 14 indirect). Catastrophic injuries are defined as fatal, non-fatal (permanent disability) or serious (head or neck injury with full recovery). Thirty-two of the 34 fall sports injuries were in football, with the other two in cross country.

While there was only one direct fatality in football in 2006-07, there were 12 indirect fatalities – three related to heatstroke, eight heart-related deaths and one related to sickle-cell anemia.

Seven catastrophic injuries were recorded during winter sports, with four coming in basketball and three in wrestling. There were no fatalities among the four direct injuries, but there were three indirect fatalities in basketball. In spring sports, there were five direct injuries (one fatality in baseball) and seven indirect fatalities.

Three of the fatalities came in lacrosse and four in track and field.

Great progress has been made in reducing direct fatalities, particularly in football. In contrast to the one direct fatality in 2006, there were 36 direct fatalities in 1968 before changes in playing rules eliminated the helmet from being used as a weapon. However, the number of deaths due to heatstroke continues to be a concern.

Mueller said that a large number of the indirect deaths over the past 10 to 12 years have been due to heatstroke, which is disturbing since there are preventive measures that coaches can take. He said coaches should have water available and schedule regular breaks in the shade to help fight the heat. Besides the prevention steps for intense heat, the report contains a number of other recommendations to reduce catastrophic injuries in high school sports.

Widmann is a fall semester intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department. She is a senior at Butler (Indiana) University majoring in journalism (news editorial) and French.

Winter sports rules changes

BY MATT VACHLON

This past spring, NFHS rules committees for basketball, swimming and diving, ice hockey and wrestling met to revise playing rules that will go into effect this winter season.

Three basketball rules were modified, including one aimed at cleaning up rough play that has taken place during free-throw situations.

All players will move up one lane space during a free-throw attempt, leaving the spot closest to the basket unoccupied. A new mark will be applied to the lane line near the free-throw line to designate the last three-foot marked lane space.

The change in Rule 8-1-4 comes with the goal of decreasing the number of fouls during free-throw rebounding action, while leaving defensive rebounding percentages unaffected.

A new penalty for wearing jewelry and/or illegal attire was one
of seven swimming and diving rules changes. Rule 3-3-4 was revised to penalize a competitor for a subsequent violation of wearing jewelry and/or illegal attire through “disqualification in the heat/round and ineligibility for the remainder of the meet if not corrected.” The committee said the previous penalty, which considered the offense to be unsporting conduct, was more severe than the violation.

With the goal of minimizing the risk of injury in high school ice hockey, the NFHS Ice Hockey Rules Committee made a significant change in goalkeeper equipment to include a flapper-style throat protector as one of six changes implemented.

The revision to Rule 3-3-1 now means that all goalkeepers will be required to wear a flapper-style throat protector to reduce exposure to the throat if a goalkeeper is knocked down during play. The protectors must be separate, commercially manufactured, unaltered and properly attached to the helmet or face mask.

The NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee made numerous rules changes this spring, with strong emphasis on risk minimization and standardized procedures to assist both coaches and referees. However, two new rules that focused on sportsmanship were changed.

Rule 5-31-1 removes the penalty for coaches whose wrestlers report to the scorer’s table not in proper uniform, not properly groomed, not properly equipped or not ready to wrestle. Additionally, Rule 6-7-1c6 now states that an unsportsmanlike act that occurs at anytime during the match shall take precedence over the first points scored in the regulation match in determining choice of position in the ultimate tiebreaker. Therefore, the wrestler whose opponent has received an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty at any time during the match will now have choice of position in the ultimate tiebreaker.

National coaching report stresses qualified coaches

BY MATT VACHLON

The National Coaching Report was released in early August by the National Association for Sports and Physical Education (NASPE) in partnership with the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) stressing the importance of qualified coaches for every athlete. It was released prior to the start of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games because many Olympians’ positive athletic experiences were the result of the influence and impact of their coaches.

More than 50 million children under the age of 18 participate in organized sport programs and the purpose of the report was to educate the American public about the training and qualifications currently required to coach athletes whose quality sport experience is of No. 1 concern.

The findings indicated that 84 percent of states have a coaching education requirement, but in some states, the requirement only applies to positions such as head varsity coach (Idaho), head coach (Minnesota), paid coach (New Hampshire), first-time coach (Alabama and Texas) and non-faculty coach (Alabama and Texas). Of the states that require coaching education, 15 states exempt individuals who have a teaching credential, regardless of the subject area that they teach.

Jody Brylinsky, Ph.D., professor of sports studies at Western Michigan University, and chair of the National Coaching Report Task Force, presented the results at a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

“The National Coaching Report clearly illustrates the need to increase the quality of training adults receive prior to engaging in coaching responsibilities,” Brylinsky said. “It serves as a resource and advocacy tool for developing policy and legislation that requires coaching education.”

NASPE is providing a full copy of the report online at its Web site at www.naspeinfo.org/coachingreport and printed copies may be obtained by calling 800-321-0789. The price of the 156-page publication is $24.

Matt Vachlon is a fall semester intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department. He is a senior at Butler (Indiana) University, majoring in journalism.
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