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Youth sports in England

Shirley H. M. Reekie

San Jose State University, shirley.reekie@sjsu.edu

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Guaranteed: You, Too, Can Be A "Winning" Coach

by
Ken Laitin and Steve Laitin

How to win is the subject of many thousands of books and articles. We have been playing in youth sports programs for more than ten years. During that time, we have had many very good coaches. We also have had many coaches who were sincere and who did try very hard but who just couldn't "put it all together." We have learned a great deal from watching all of them. With some of our "winning" coaches, we went the entire season without ever losing or tying a game. With other "winning" coaches, we also had unblemished records — not a single victory, and yet for us and all of the other members on our team, these too were winning seasons. In this article, we want to share with you some tips on how "you, too, can be a 'winning' coach."

On one of my first teams, the Roadrunners, at our first practice, our coach announced that after we had attended a certain number of practices (and if we tried hard), we would get a patch to sew on to our sweatshirts. After three or four practices and before the season began, he gathered us around to give us our patches. He called each player up individually, and told the group the special skills that the player was concentrating on and what improvements he had shown. Then the coach shook hands with the player and awarded him his patch. After giving out all the patches, the coach announced that we had worked hard and now were officially a team: the Roadrunners. We all applauded and cheered. **Message:** All players want to feel that they are part of a group.

After the first game, the coach gathered us around for a team meeting. We discussed the game. Each player told what he thought he had done best and what he thought he needed to improve on. For some, it was special skills. For others, it was endurance. And for others, it was the ability to size up the game and to know where to position themselves on the field and where and when to pass the ball. Each of us agreed to a program of practice and improvement. This program was broken down into small activities that we would be able to work on over the next two weeks. The coach told us that if we completed the program, he would have a little surprise for us. At each practice during the next two weeks, we would measure our progress against our goals. If the goals seemed to be too hard, we'd discuss them, and, if necessary, we would reduce them. If the goals proved to be too easy, we would raise them. At the end of two weeks, we all felt good about ourselves. At our team meeting, the coach gave out our surprises: Red shoe laces for all of us to wear in the next game. **Message:** Everyone needs achievable goals to work towards. Goals should combine individual and group objectives. They should be in small increments and when they are obtained, the individual and the group should receive recognition for doing so. Success is a state of mind, and a coach can help program his players into both feeling and being successful.

Another of our coaches announced that he would give out prizes for the following categories: Most Valuable Player, Most Improved Player, Most Spirited and Cooperative Player. He described the Most Valuable Player as being the best all-around team player — the player who passes the ball and who supports and backs up his fellow players, as well as being skilled. The prizes were popular (and inexpensive) paperback sports books. We all tried hard for

the various prizes. The first week six out of 14 players on the team won them. The coach then told all of the other players that if they also tried as hard as those players who had won, that they too could win. This gave every player something to shoot for. The next week every player earned his prize. **Message:** Select values that will encourage each individual to grow as a person and measure success in terms of each individual's acceptance of these values. In this case, the better players were given recognition for meeting their responsibility for not only utilizing their skills to the fullest, but for also helping and supporting the weaker players on and off the field. The least skilled players were given recognition for meeting their responsibility of practicing hard and mastering necessary skills. This helped improve the general level of team play. The "inbetween" players were given recognition for meeting their responsibility for being good team citizens and for helping to keep the team's morale high. During that three-week period, and for the rest of the season, we all felt like winners — and thus were winners.

We have also observed many other winning techniques, and if you are interested, we will be glad to share them with you in the future.

*Ken Laitin, 16, and Steve Laitin, 14, along with their younger sister, Lindy, 12, are the authors and illustrators of *The World's #1 Best Selling Soccer Book*.

Youth Sports In England

by
Shirley H. M. Reekie

In England, sports for young people are organized predominantly through the school system, and there is no group outside the schools which is solely concerned with youth sport. Nevertheless, a recognition of the sudden falling off in participation in sport when young people leave school has led several groups to attempt to change this situation.

The co-ordinating body for sport in England is the Sports Council, which not only runs courses but also attempts to gather together sports-related information from many sources.

Due to the nature of youth sport in England it is not possible to state any over-all, commonly agreed upon goals. Neither is it possible to be specific about sponsors or certification (although both exist), but it is true to say that most coaching is on a voluntary basis.

Having outlined the somewhat patchy nature of the youth sports scene, seven examples will be given in an attempt to give a representative illustration of non-school based sport for young people.

England is fortunate in having a network of sports clubs, and often these have a youth section. A local track and field athletics club, for example, may run a junior group where coaching is given on a voluntary basis by one of the more experienced club members.

Most local government authorities run recreation departments, and many have built multi-purpose sports centers for public use in recent years. Coaches employed by the local authority run regular courses, often designed specifically for young people, and also hold non-residential summer schools.

The movement toward summer sports schools is steadily growing in both the public and private sectors, and it represents another source for youth sports activity.

The Sports Council, already mentioned, runs several courses annually especially for young people. Some of these are for gifted performers (and some commercial sponsorship is beginning here, notably by petroleum companies and breweries), whilst most are for all ages and abilities.

A recent development has been the allocation of 2 million pounds (approx. \$4.8 million at current rates) in June 1978 by the Minister for Sport to professional soccer clubs to enable them to develop their grounds for community use. There is no doubt that young people were particularly in mind in this scheme, since it was mentioned as a possible start in solving the problem of young football hooligans' behavior. The community use scheme has now also been extended to professional Rugby League clubs.

Another Sports Council idea has been the mobile "Sportbus," which takes equipment and helpers to young people, particularly in urban areas.

Finally, there is a nationwide network of youth clubs, both public and private, at which various sports are often central activities, and coaching is both paid and voluntary.

It is perhaps true to say that youth sport as such has, as yet, received little attention as an entity in its own right; however, the above agencies are but a few of those to concern themselves with the area in some way. What is perhaps needed is a growth of co-ordination between those agencies with similar aims, so as to make their contributions more effective and reach larger numbers of young people.

Shirley Reekie is from England and is in the doctoral program at Ohio State.

Delayed and Lost Menstruation In Women Athletes

by

Philip G. Hoffman, Jr., M.D., Ph.D.

Girls who train vigorously may have later onset of menstrual periods than their sedentary peers. Women who begin vigorous physical activity later tend to have lighter, less frequent periods, and in the extreme, no periods at all.

The cause of delay or loss of menstrual function appears to be lack of body fat. The menstrual cycle requires complex hormone interactions among the brain, pituitary gland and the ovary. It now appears that a small amount of the female hormone, estrogen, is necessary each month to prime the menstrual cycle. The normal source of this estrogen is probably an inactive hormone precursor from the adrenal gland which is converted to estrogen in fatty tissues of the body.

If there is too little fat, there are not periods.

Low body fat occurs not only in some athletes, obviously, but also in women who are relatively sedentary but pursue extreme degrees of thinness because of the psychiatric disorder known as "anorexia nervosa," or simply because of a strong urge to look like a Vogue model. These women also frequently lose their periods.

Dr. Rose Frisch of Harvard has found that a girl must have at least 18% of her total weight in the form of fat to begin menstruation, and over the age of 18, 22% fat is necessary to maintain periods. Her estimates of weights necessary to start periods initially and to resume periods if they have stopped are given in the table. These weights were derived largely from women with weight loss due to vigorous dieting rather than exercise. Since athletes would be expected to have a larger muscle mass, the weights should be considered minimum estimates. That is, a 5'6" long distance runner may have to maintain a weight of 115 pounds rather than 111 pounds to have normal cycles.

The activities most frequently associated with lack of menstruation are long distance running (thirty to seventy miles per week), gymnastics, varsity volleyball, tennis, and the ballet. Swimming, golf, and basketball are less frequently implicated. The actual level of training is much more important than the specific sport. Generally high school and college intramural athletes do not have menstrual problems. College varsity athletes have a modest increase in lack of menses, while among those who are in training for Olympic competitions, the problem is very common.

There is as yet no evidence that lack of menstruation associated with lack of body fat is harmful. Most women resume menstruation when, and if, they gain weight, and are normally fertile thereafter.

The major problem with weight loss induced lack of periods is the confusion it may cause. Lack of periods can also be due to abnormalities of development, both non-serious and serious medical disorders, psychological stress and, of course, pregnancy. As a general rule, a physician should be consulted if a girl had not started menstruating by the age of seventeen. She should consult a doctor as early as age fourteen, however, if she has not begun to develop breasts, underarm hair or pubic hair. For women who have begun to menstruate and then stop, consultation should be obtained after three months of no periods and every six months

thereafter. If pregnancy is a possibility, consultation should be obtained much earlier.

Approximate Weight Required To Maintain Menstruation

HEIGHT FOR FIRST PERIOD	WEIGHT TO RESUME PERIOD	
FT.-IN.	POUNDS	POUNDS
4-6	69	77
4-8	74	83
4-10	78	88
5-0	83	94
5-2	88	100
5-4	93	105
5-6	98	111
5-8	103	117
5-10	108	122
6-0	113	128
6-2	118	133

Dr. Hoffman is the Director of the Hormone Receptor Laboratory, UC-San Francisco 94143

Definition of a hugger: One of the bench warmers you can hug after a victory without getting sweaty or dirty.

Off The Bookshelf



Goodman, Joel and Matt Weinstein, **Playfair**, Impact Publishers, P.O. Box 1094, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406, \$8.95

PLAY FAIR

Every once in a while you read a book that should never end. **PLAYFAIR**, Everybody's Guide to Noncompetitive Play, is one such book. The concept, brought to us through Impact Publishers' and authored by Matt Weinstein and Joel Goodman, is a breath of fresh air in a world of sports and games — a world that often falls short.

Noncompetitive games, briefly, are games for people, as opposed to "sports," where people play at it. The games allow you to be supportive, cooperative, and open . . . just be yourself. They are safe, yet active, challenging, yet nonthreatening.

The book is more than a handbook of things to do to "break the ice" at gatherings, develop closer family ties through play, or ways of establishing play diversions in a tension-filled world. **PLAYFAIR** is a way to enjoy yourself through positive physical activity. The **PLAYFAIR** recipe is well-developed and logical, and should appeal to groups of fun-loving people everywhere: Is the activity fun, cooperative in nature, and does it involve positive action? Is it imaginative? Does equality rule? Can each player set his/her own standard of play? Is it challenging, and does it put people before the rules? If so, it's **PLAYFAIR**.

PLAYFAIR'S chief contribution may be its challenge to the reader: Think up your own games. The 62 games in the book are only a beginning, and an excellent one, for the new generation of persons who want to turn off the television, and **DO SOMETHING!** Get this book. You may never be the same again.

Playfair was reviewed by Paul Harris, the publisher of Soccer for Americans, and the author of 12 books on soccer.