



DR. K'S MENTAL MINUTE

THE ATHLETIC MIND INSTITUTE

“Mental Safety” for Avoiding Injuries

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One of the more difficult times for any student athlete is when an injury occurs. Even if it is just a minor injury that will keep a student athlete out of practice for a few days, it is still very challenging for him or her to not compete on some level. As parents, I am quite certain many of you have encountered the difficulty surrounding an injury suffered by your son or daughter. Although I believe that injuries are “part of the game,” there are ways that you can help your student athletes avoid and/or reduce their chances for injury.

Injuries Occur with a Lack Of Focus

Many injuries occur when a lack of focus exists on the part of the student athlete. The lack of focus can be due to many reasons, such as being distracted by school, family, relationships or college choice, but it is important for student athletes to maintain their best focus possible. Learning to maximize their focus will not only create more consistent and higher level sport performance, but it will also reduce the chances for injury. This is not to say that every time an athlete is unfocused, he or she will experience an injury, but it is to point out that injuries occur many times when there is a lack of concentration. It is important for student athletes to make certain they are mentally focused as a way to maximize athletic performance and greatly reduce the chances for sustaining injuries.

Injuries Occur with Physical Fatigue

Student athletes are also at higher risk for injury when they are physically tired. Physical fatigue can lead to a lack of focus, which in turn, can lead to an injury. Again, it is not to say that an injury *will* occur when a student athlete is physically fatigued, but the risk for injury does increase. Thus, it is very important for student athletes to stay mentally focused when pushing your body. Student athletes will become physically tired, sometimes exhausted – this is part of competing. But they can reduce the chances for injury by remaining very mentally sharp when this fatigue happens.

Be Physically and Mentally Ready for Practice

One of the most important things to emphasize to your young student-athletes is to be *mentally and physically* prepared for practice and competition. Physical readiness is being rested, have proper nutrition and fluids, and not inappropriately pushing an already existing injury. Mental readiness means being focused on the task at hand, not

being distracted by things outside of their sport, and knowing how to mentally prepare for practice. One of the greatest aspects of my job is helping student athletes learn how to “mentally prepare” for practice and competitions because not only am I helping maximize their athletic performance, but I am also keeping them safe. Thus, emphasize both physical and mental readiness – this will keep your kids safe, help them perform better and ultimately have more fun!

Play Hard, Play Smart and Play Well!