



Sports Injury Recovery

Natural, Time-Tested, Athlete Proven

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The #1 Mistake Coaches Make with their Players... and Five Reasons You Should Avoid It

As a coach, you're a powerful and often psychologically imposing figure in the minds of your players. In fact, one of the top four causes of stress in athletes is "concern about social evaluation by others, particularly the coach."¹

Your players worry about what YOU think of them. After all, you're the one who decides if they play or not. You control how long they play, what position they're in, and access to opportunities and challenges that can have an impact on their entire playing career. That's a *lot* of influence.

It's also a big responsibility.

When one of your players is in pain – even seriously injured – you know he'll "get back in there" if you tell him to. No matter how much it hurts. No matter what the consequences might be.

So don't make the mistake of trusting the judgment of a player who says, "It's okay, Coach. I can do it!" You can't trust their judgment because they're more focused on playing for *you* and winning the game for *you* than they are about maintaining their health. Are they willing – though maybe subconsciously – to get seriously injured to please you...to win the game? You bet. So if you overlook the fact that your players are *very likely* to exaggerate how "fine" they are, just to please or impress you, you're making the **#1 Mistake Coaches Make with their Players**...one you seriously need to avoid.

To impress upon your mind the grave mistake of letting your player be the decision-maker, we've got five reasons you'd be better off trusting your own judgment instead.

REASON #1: His Body is Telling Him

Something...He's Not Listening

When your player feels a site-specific pain – not the soreness that comes after a workout, but a pain he can put his finger on (literally) – his body is trying to tell him that he's either *got* a problem or he's on the fringe of injuring himself. The intensity of the pain should be a good indicator of how important it is to immediately take him out of play.

Pain should not be ignored. It is the body telling the brain that it needs the time and resources necessary to recover. And in this case you, his Coach, need to be the one paying attention in order to protect your player from his natural inclination to override that message and play anyway. So if he's feeling pain and the reason he won't stop is to avoid the stigma, you're not doing yourself any favors if you let him play.

Here's why...

Less pain means quicker recovery. If you stop him when he first feels the pain, he might actually be back in the game sooner than if you decide to keep playing him. Because if the pain gets worse, or he incurs a more serious injury, he'll be out of the game even longer.

REASON #2: The Weakest Link is Where the Chain Breaks

A site-specific pain is a terrific indicator of a weakness in your player's system. And just like the links in a chain, when you put that system under tension, it's the weakest link that's going to break.

One key part of the body's ability to perform is its system of muscles. The muscles work together. They support each other. They back each other up.





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They're sort of like their own team. On your team, when a player gets hurt, the other players take up the slack and you sub the injured player out. He rests and takes time to recover.

But with muscles...there are no substitutes.

When a player is in pain and you decide to let him play anyway, his team of muscles has to keep playing too...they're just one player short. Not only do the surrounding muscles have to work even harder, they don't even have the luxury of subbing their injured player out and getting a fresh replacement.

When one muscle is injured, *all* the muscles in that area have to work harder. Playing through the pain increases the strain...and the risk...for all of them.

The fact that he *can* play doesn't mean he *should* play...and you're taking a risk if you let him play.

REASON #3: If You Drive on a Flat Tire, You Damage the Rim

If you got a flat tire, how many miles would you drive on it? How long would you go before you stopped to put on your spare?

You wouldn't drive any farther than you had to, of course!

Why? Because everyone knows that if you drive on a flat, you'll first ruin the tire, then damage the rim, alter the alignment and the bearings, and sooner or later even the interior of the car will develop a permanent rattle. In short, it won't take too many miles before the flat tire has seriously altered the functionality of the car. You've turned a relatively small problem into a big problem.

The human body works exactly the same way.

If you send your player back in and ask him to play while injured or in pain, that leaky or flat tire is going to turn into a major problem for him...and for you. Do

you really want to have to explain to his parents why he's out for the rest of the season when it could have just been for a game or two? After all, when it comes down to brass tacks, no one will buy it if you blame *him* for going back into the game. You're the one calling the shots.

REASON #4: If You Want Him to Play Next Year...Don't Play Him Now

Young athletes feel indestructible. As a result, they're often too willing to give in to the temptation to play through the pain...especially if you're the one asking them to. They tell themselves, "It'll go away!" And their rationalizing makes them quick to trade off their future in order to play NOW.

But don't let him trade today for tomorrow. It's just a game...though no athlete wants to hear that...and you probably don't either. It will be over in a matter of minutes or hours. But how long will his pain last? How long will he be able to play if he gets hurt right now?

The fact is, there are lots of games, but your player's got just ONE BODY to play them with. If you decide to let him play through the pain, it could result in a chronic injury that comes back to haunt him...and your team...for many games to come.

REASON #5: Injuries Can Kill Team Spirit

When you're injured, when you're totally out of the game, it's not just about the pain anymore. It turns into an emotional handicap as well. In fact, another top stress factor for athletes is a "loss of...control over their environment."² The athlete who *has to* sit out game after game...or who just decides to quit going since, "I can't play anyway!"...is *not* a happy player. And those feelings can spread to the team.





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As the Coach, you know better than anyone how an injury impacts a team. Other players have to fill in. Maybe you have to swap players into new positions that they're not comfortable in or that they just don't excel at. When players get shuffled around to different positions, then athlete anxiety kicks in at an even higher level.

Nobody needs that kind of stress.

And the longer that goes on...the more everyone will wish you'd decided to just sit him out right at the start.

Use Your Power Wisely

You have the power to make a player sit out or let him play. And you also have a huge influence on how he feels about your decision. Remember, that player *stresses* out over what you think about him. Somehow, you've got to disassociate "being tough" from your decision. If you decide to sit him out in the best interest of his muscles (and the team) so you can play him more later on...tell him that. Don't let him think that *you think* he can't handle it.

Make it clear that the health of your players comes first. Let them know that it's better for the team to stay healthy, to be able to stay in their positions, and to be able to keep practicing as a team...without anyone having to sit out the season. What you don't have to tell them is how much easier your job will be if you can keep the right players in the right positions all season long, without having to fill in the holes made by injured players...or spend your time making phone calls to their parents.

In the long-run, protecting your players from injury maximizes your team's potential while making your job as the coach a lot easier.

And who doesn't' want that?



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