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# Crucial for Coaches: Injury management know-how

By Mike Woitalla

To coach young children where I live, I had to get licenses from a couple of coaching courses that totaled five days of instruction.

We were taught all sorts of drills -- a few of which resembled soccer-playing -- and were given some useful tips. Like keeping plastic bags in your coaching bag in case you need to pick up dog poo before practice.

The league provided first-aid kits in our coaching bags. But injury management training wasn't included in the required coaching courses.

So I signed up for an American Red Cross first-aid course. There I spent most of the day becoming intimate with Rescue Annie, learning CPR, and working that wonderful little machine, the defibrillator. (It actually speaks!) But the kind of first-aid I'd most likely encounter at the soccer field was barely covered.

The team I coached at the time had, believe it or not, four parents who were doctors. So whenever one of the little players got hurt, I simply looked down the sideline and picked an MD to attend to the child.

But what if I didn't have doctors on the sideline?

My response to injured players had been mainly based on what I remember from how the trainers responded to hurt players when I played high school and college ball. Certainly, depending on long-term memory or the odds that there are docs around isn't a satisfactory approach.

Coaches aren't expected to be doctors, but they must attend to injured players and make the difficult decision of whether a player is fit to play after suffering an injury.

To help educate coaches on injury management, orthopedic surgeon **Dev Mishra** has created [SidelineSportsDoc.com](http://SidelineSportsDoc.com) -- "The Coach's Guide to Youth Sports Injury Management."

Dr. Mishra has served as a team physician for the University of California, he is currently a team physician for several San Francisco Bay Area high schools, and is a member of the team physician pool with the U.S. Soccer Federation. On a weekly basis at his medical practice he sees youth players with significant injuries that started out as minor injuries.

Extrapolating from what he has witnessed, he figures that the potential number of major secondary injuries -- those injuries that became worse because a young player was returned to play before his or her injury had recovered -- suffered by youth athletes nationally is 1 to 2 million annually.

In other words, much grief and cost could be saved with an informed first response from the sidelines and prudent decision-making in determining when a player should return to action.

One of the components of [SidelineSportsDoc.com](http://SidelineSportsDoc.com) -- which also offers downloadable MP3 content -- is the clear, concise PDF for soccer coaches that covers the most common soccer injuries --

including abrasions, ankles, knees -- and pretty much every other type of injury or ailment that a coach could come across.

The beauty is that it's not a daunting document. It's reader-friendly and easily comprehensible. It provides an invaluable four-step guide to on-field injury evaluation applicable for every situation. For all injuries, it includes the crucial advice on what "Red Flags" to look for, how to make the "Play or Sit?" decision, and basic sideline management of the injury.

Also included, of course, is advice on when to call for professional medical personnel.

Reading the PDF or listening to the MP3s -- which run about 5 to 7 minutes per injury -- leaves one feeling much more self-assured about the prospects of attending to a hurt player. And a coach's confident countenance can go far to settle a child shaken up by an injury.

Shortly after I perused the SidelineSportsDoc PDF, a player on my team suffered a bloody nose. That too had been covered: "To control bleeding, use a clean cloth, paper towels, or gauze, to cover the nose. Firmly pinch the soft part of the nose just beneath the hard bridge of the nose and hold for at least 3-5 minutes ..."

As is usually the case, the injury was minor and she soon returned to play. But it sure was nice to be prepared.

*"The Coach's Guide to Youth Sports Injury Management" for soccer is available at [SidelineSportsDoc.com](http://SidelineSportsDoc.com).*

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