



DELAWARE ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS

**Caring for the Youth Athlete
(and their Parents):**
Mind, Body, and Spirit



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DISCLOSURE

- No financial disclosures relevant to this talk





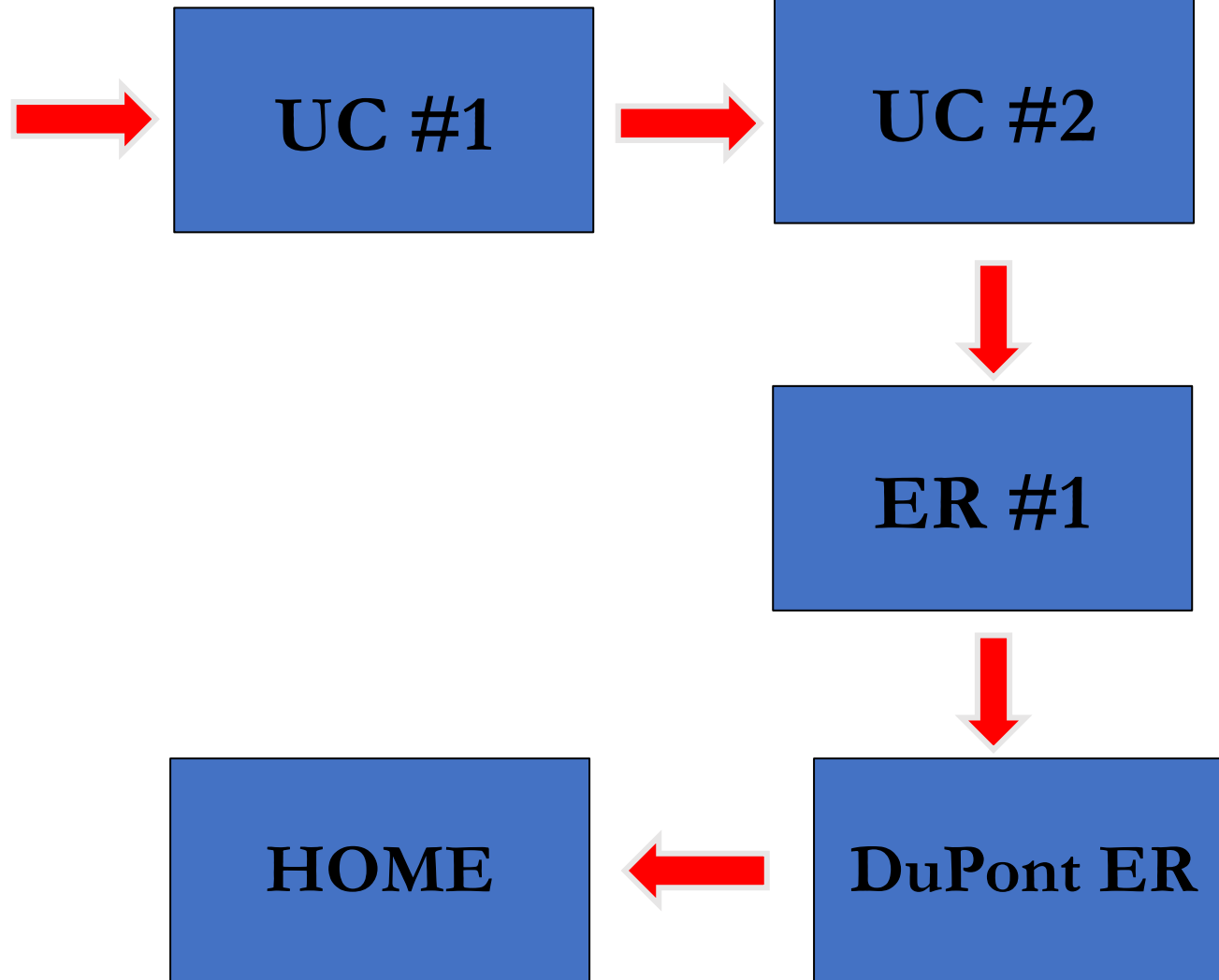
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this presentation the learner will be able to:

1. Understand pros/cons of sport specialization
2. Recognize benefits of organized youth sports
3. Provide counseling to parents



Clinical Example





POTENTIAL RISKS AND REWARDS OF EARLY SPORT SPECIALIZATION

LaPrade et al. (2016). AOSSM early sport specialization consensus statement.

Bean et al. (2014). Understanding how organized youth sport may be harming individual players within the family unit: A review



Less time
with friends



Burnout
and dropout
from sport

*Early sport specialization is not a
requirement for success at the
highest levels of competition....*



Impaired
psychosocial
health and
development



Decreased
enjoyment



Underdeveloped
neuromuscular
coordination



Family
stress
and
strain



Increased
injury risk



High
cost



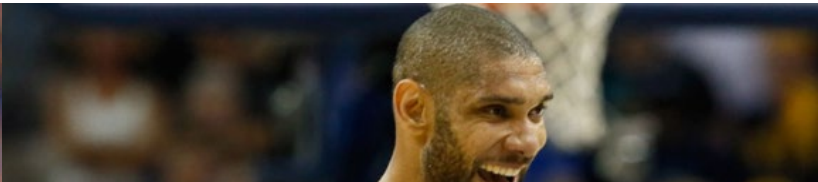
Compromised
academics



Impaired
overall athletic
development

*and it's believed to be unhealthy
physically and mentally for young
athletes. It also discourages unstructured
free play, which has many benefits.*





Maintain Appropriate Expectations

Data from: NCAA website



PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES WHO MOVE ON TO PLAY IN THE NCAA



In 2016-17, **4.3 million men** and **3.0 million women** participated in High School sports, **BUT...**

94% didn't make it to the NCAA level

Only 5-6% of High School (HS) athletes play in the NCAA

High School Only	Division III	Division II	Division I	Any Division
94.27%	2.31%	1.47%	2.11%	5.73%
94.10%	2.32%	1.48%	1.93%	5.90%

Women's Sport

2.8 million female high school athletes didn't make it

Men's Sport

4.075 million male high school athletes didn't make it

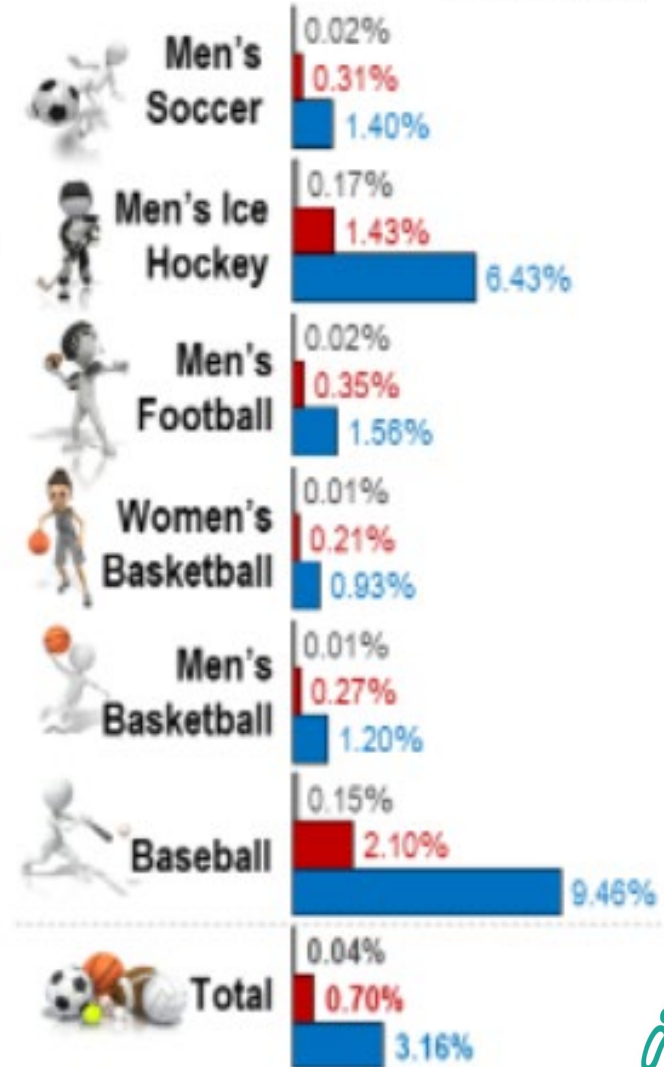
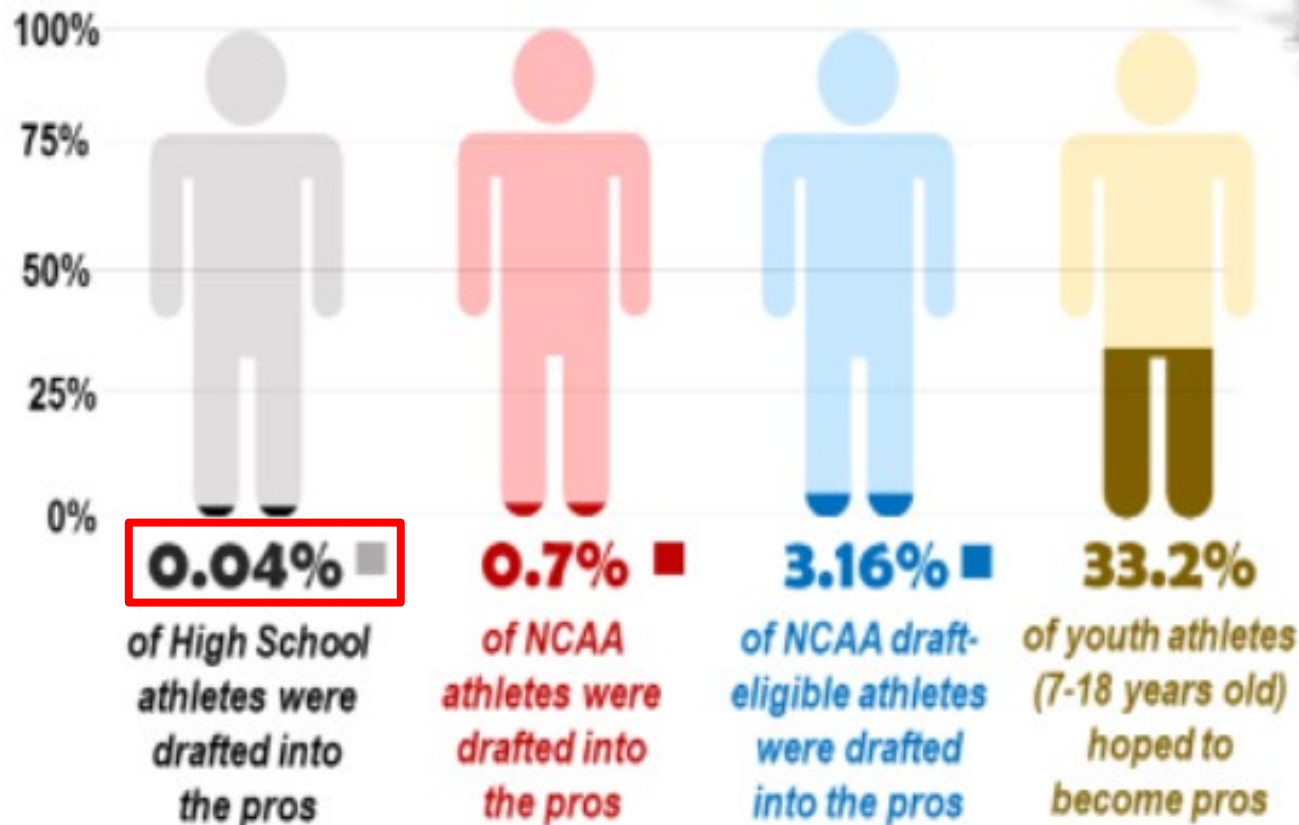
Maintain Appropriate Expectations

FANTASY VS. REALITY: ODDS OF MAKING IT TO PRO SPORT

Data from: NCAA website and Padaki et al. (2017). Factors that drive youth specialization.



Despite the fact that 33.2% of youth athletes hope to become professional athletes one day, the overwhelming majority of hopeful athletes won't accomplish this feat.



Unstructured Free Play





What research tells us...

UNSTRUCTURED PLAY

benefits healthy child development



Fun and Creativity

- Unstructured play is **fun** and **promotes creativity**
- This is especially true when using objects that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, and taken apart and put back together



Social Health and Team Work

- Unstructured play at recess is shown to strengthen **problem solving** and **conflict resolution skills**
- Outdoor play where children can explore independently can improve **social health** indicators



Mental and Emotional Health

- Unstructured play is important to children's **mental** and **emotional health**
- Unstructured play can promote **positive self-concept** and **self-esteem**
- Active play can help **decrease anxiety** and **depression**



Physical Health and Gross Motor Skills

- Active, unstructured play helps reduce sedentary behaviours, promotes **healthy weights** and improves **gross motor skills**
- This reduces body fat, improves **musculoskeletal** and **cardiovascular fitness** which benefit physical health



Learning and Attention at School

- There is a reported association between unstructured play at recess and improved cognitive **skills**, such as **attention**, **concentration** and **memory**, as well as **improved grades** and standardized **test scores**



Resiliency and Risk Management Skills

- When children experience uncertainty in play they can develop **emotional reactions**, **physical capabilities**, **coping skills** and are better able to **manage adversity**
- These skills promote **resilience** and **independence** to thrive in adolescence and adulthood

Playing Through Pain



- Most pain from overuse
- Make sure performance is not affected
- Look for physical signs (bruising/redness/limping)
- Should resolve with rest
- Get evaluated early if concerned

Cross Training: Good or Bad?



- Should be tailored to individual child
- Focus should be light/body weight
- Goal is to teach discipline and personal accomplishment
- Competition aspect should be minimized

Baseball / Softball Overuse Injuries



- Minimize pitch counts
- Maintain proper form
- Maintain strength and flexibility
- Do not pitch and catch in same game
- Delay curves and off-speed pitches

Challenges of Youth Sports



Benefits of Youth Sports

PHYSICAL BENEFITS

↓ Blood Pressure
↓ BMI
↑ Insulin sensitivity
↑ Bone density
↓ Heart disease
↓ Resting heart rate

PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS

Academic performance
Self image
Perceived health status
Life satisfaction
Reduced feelings of depression & anxiety
Promotes sense of well-being

SOCIAL BENEFITS

Teamwork
Group problem solving
Building relationships
Competition
Discipline
Accountability
Self-motivation

Long-Term Athlete Development



Resilience

- “Mental reservoir” of strength that people are able to call on in times of need to carry them through without falling apart
- Ability to withstand, recover or “bounce back” from difficult situations - disappointment, rejection, defeat or loss
- Lack of resiliency can lead to increased stress, mental health challenges and/or unhealthy coping mechanisms

RESILIENCE



HOW TO HELP PREVENT CHILDREN FROM QUITTING SPORT

 @BELIEVEPHQ

WHY DO CHILDREN QUIT SPORT?

IT'S NOT FUN ANYMORE (X)

THEY DON'T PLAY ENOUGH (X)

PRESSURE TO PERFORM (X)

THEY HAVE LOST OWNERSHIP OF THE EXPERIENCE

IT'S TOO COMPETITIVE (X)

TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON WINNING (X)

NO LONGER INTERESTED IN THE SPORT (X)



GIVE PLAYERS EQUAL PLAYING TIME

MAKE SPORT FUN

BE CREATIVE IN
YOUR TRAINING
SESSIONS

INVOLVE YOUR
ATHLETES IN THE
TRAINING
SESSIONS



UNDERSTAND WHAT MOTIVATES YOUR ATHLETES

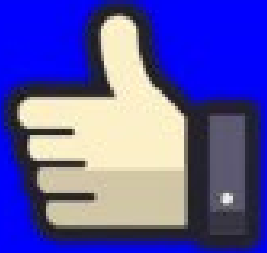


ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO TRY DIFFERENT SPORTS

**CREATE A
POSITIVE
LEARNING
ENVIRONMENT**



**SUPPORT AND
ENCOURAGE YOUR
CHILD**



**DEVELOP
AUTONOMY IN
YOUR PLAYERS**



**FOCUS ON THE
PROCESS NOT
THE RESULT**

**HELP CHILDREN TO BALANCE
THEIR SCHOOL WORK AND
SPORT**

**BE A ROLE MODEL TO YOUR
ATHLETE OR CHILD**

**HELP CHILDREN
TO EMBRACE
FAILURE**

**DON'T OVER
PRESSURE YOUR
ATHLETES**



DEVELOP A SOCIALLY SUPPORTIVE AND HARMONIOUS CLIMATE

Parent Takeaways (Keep the Sport Fun!)



**Results at a young age
doesn't matter, but
DEVELOPMENT from
the sport does**

- 70% of children are dropping out of organized sports by their early teens, mainly because the sport is no longer fun and too stressful
- Remind yourself why your kids compete in sports (nothing to do with results)
- Be happy and have fun at games/competitions. If you are, your children most likely will too
- Control your emotions at games/competitions
- If you find that you are stressed, worried or anxious, don't let your children see you that way

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QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU!