

Respect in Sports

www.sportsalliancemn.org

A monthly newsletter for everyone interested in supporting a positive youth sports experience.



The Sports Alliance of Minnesota is a coalition of sports organizations whose mission is to provide tools for creating a positive sports environment.

Become a Member!

Upcoming Events:

MRPA Annual Conference and Exhibit Hall 2009

September 22 – 25
National Sports Center, Blaine

More information at
www.mnrpa.org

Thank you
to our
sponsor.



Age Appropriate Training

Deb Weinreis – Minnesota Recreation & Park Association

The age that families want to sign their kids up for organized sports seems to be getting younger & younger. Although children can gain a lot of positive attributes by participating in organized sports early on, there can also be some downfalls as well. For example, if the demands of the sport exceed the physical development capabilities of the child, a feeling of failure and frustration could occur. There are a lot of youth coaches with good intent, who are volunteering their time to help coach, but who do not have the formal training or teaching skills to understand the age-appropriate capabilities of the children they are working with. Years ago, I can remember officiating a basketball game for 4th graders who were trying to run the same offense that my team had ran in college and I remember thinking to myself, “wow, WE could barely run that offense”. Yet, these coaches try to teach certain plays & offenses just because they have been proven successful for other coaches, (who are usually coaching at much higher levels).

Another area of concern is burnout. With all of the organized activities and supervision at such an early age, there seems to be less time for spontaneous unstructured play, which helps build creativity and skills necessary for social interaction. These days it seems that children are so overscheduled with activities. And it becomes even more of a concern later in life when a healthy lifestyle is dependent on physical activity and this person has no interest in getting out and exercising after having a negative memory from their childhood.

So how do you know what activities are age appropriate for a child?

Assuming that it is the child who is showing interest in a particular activity, and not the adult, most research seems to recommend the ages of 5 or 6 to be the earliest starting age for organized team sports. Of course there can be many physical & psychological variations in maturity at this age to consider as well. The important thing to remember is to try & balance adult organized activities and free playtime. A child's first experience with organized sports needs to be a positive one that will encourage a lifelong interest in physical activities.

Organized sports sessions need to be tailored to match the developmental level of the participant. Since younger children have a shorter attention span, exercise sessions should be short and emphasize playfulness. Modifications to the field size, lowering the baskets, and limiting physical contact (hits) should also be considered. Participants should be encouraged to try a variety of sports along with a variety of positions at their practices. Individual and lifetime sports such as tennis, swimming and the martial arts should also be encouraged.

There are many online resources available that are more sports specific for determining age-appropriate activities including;

Educated Sports Parent at www.educatedsportsparent.com

Kids Sports Network at www.ksnusa.org

www.gladstien.com/SportsMedicine/CHILDRENANDSPORTSguide.shtml

Sports Alliance of Minnesota, PO Box 27031, Golden Valley, MN 55305

