



enduring INJURY

Is the Sports Community Playing it Safe?

If you help coach your child's sports team, you might want to consider what scholars at Duke, Harvard, Cornell and other top schools are saying about risk-taking on the playing field: there isn't enough of it. This is the fascinating, recent subject of many an academic paper—as well as heated economics, psychology and statistics classroom discussion.

A televised sporting event is of great value to these instructors because it offers a complex series of risk-assessment and decision-making processes that play out step-by-step for all to examine. A pause in a World Series videotape can open the door to a complex analysis of rational choice. Behavioral economics looks in part at why people act irrationally, i.e., why stock market bubbles occur or why your fear of a plane crash might make you drive hundreds of miles instead of flying.

Statisticians can find many examples in sports when the odds (and gains) are far greater in going for it on fourth-and-four or pitching to a home run hitter instead of walking him. An obvious but still sensible risk seems to cause coaches to focus too intensely on the worst case scenario.

In the football example, punting from mid-field and gaining 30 yards of field position is usually not as valuable as the chance to keep the drive going when field goal position is imminent. So the next time your daughter's basketball team is down by two in the final seconds, you might want to set her up for a three-pointer instead of two to tie.

(The New York Times, July 30, 2003)

ANKLE SPRAINS: A RUNNER'S REHAB CHECKLIST

a runner's ankles are vulnerable to sprains in part because the ankles are required to withstand the same force as hips and knees, but these latter joints have about four and a half times more contact area over which to distribute it.

Without rest, followed by gradual movement and then strengthening exercise, odds are you'll injure your ankle again, and maybe worse.

When that inevitable ankle sprain occurs, the road to recovery begins with knowing the importance of proper rehabilitation. Without rest, followed by gradual movement and then strengthening exercise, odds are you'll

injure your ankle again, and maybe worse. More severe sprains can require seven to ten days in a cast, followed by four to six weeks in an ankle stirrup. Whatever the degree of sprain, however, a period of immobilization is essential, and skipping rehab steps will spell disaster.

So when are you ready to hit the road? The following guide may help. This is not a substitute for regular doctor's visits, of course; follow your therapist's prescribed exercise plan carefully and let him/her know if you're feeling pain in any healing stage. Still, you may find it useful to check off each statement as it becomes true, moving through the four phases of rehab until you're ready to run again:

Phase One: Ready to Start Rehab

- I am wearing the brace or wrap my doctor prescribed.
- I can stand on the injured leg without pain.
- Pain and swelling have gone down.

continued page 5

CROSSTRAINING FOR THE WALKING WOUNDED

Resting from running injuries doesn't have to take you out of the game altogether. Crosstraining can help you maintain fitness gains, strength, flexibility and your sanity while allowing injured tissues to heal. Make sure you have a good diagnosis and that you've corrected the training errors that contributed to your injury. Here are some suggestions for crosstraining that you can use for certain common injuries.

Achilles tendinitis—Cycling eliminates the impact that is a major culprit in Achilles injuries. It stretches without lateral stress and builds leg muscles (especially the calves) that can help with injury prevention when you're running again.

Hamstring strain—Try rowing, but take it easy at first. Rowing strengthens and

stretches the hamstrings and back muscles. Weak and inflexible hamstrings can be a set-up for strains and pulls.

Runner's knee—Swim to maintain cardiovascular fitness, but head to the weight room to solve your knee problems. Build your quadriceps, particularly the vastus medialis obliquus with straight leg raises. This is the muscle that bulges just above the kneecap on the inner side of your thigh. It's responsible for proper tracking of the kneecap.

Shin Splints—Deep water running works all the muscles used in running, minus the impact. Once your shin pain is gone, reintroduce ground running (and the force of gravity) gradually.