

The Sports Doctor: Watch out for overuse injuries with fall sports

Chris Fox, my colleague on the Sports Doctor Radio Show, and I often think about how impressive the high school sports teams are in our areas. Pick any sport this fall — football, girls volleyball, cross country, girls tennis and soccer — or for that matter, any season, and we've got some of the best.

Hopefully, all athletes were well tuned to the important mixture of summer training, "intelligent rest" and recovery time. Too often, the "more is better" syndrome overwhelms the necessity of time off from what often is year-round playing, training and practice. One of the most important arts of sports medicine is the constant balance of smart play, aggressive schedules and overuse — not always easy!

With new attention on concussions in high-schoolers and younger athletes, one important point made is the youngster not telling (for various reasons) their coach, trainer or parents that symptoms are present. Even though most overuse injury concerns aren't nearly as serious as concussions, that reluctance to report symptoms is of concern. I often hear from a young athlete that his or her foot, ankle, shin, knee hurts, but "I can't back off. My coach or parent doesn't listen. They will get mad; I'll get cut." Many times, it's self-pressure that's involved.

I've rarely met young athletes (all levels included) faking discomfort. Pay attention. This is where the reliance starts on drugs, usually over-the-counter pain medications and anti-inflammatories. There are exceptions, but a good rule is, if your kids need these drugs to keep in the action, you're pushing over the line. As I've mentioned in many previous articles, in the lower extremities, if injuries and problems persist or don't respond to rest and treatment, pay attention to foot mechanics. Go to my website, www.sportsdoctorradio.com/newsarticles and read about orthotics and overuse injuries.

I also received some great responses to the question: "Which sports have the best athletes?" Thanks to all who responded — here are a few brief examples:

Brad: Motocross racers face some of the most physically and mentally challenging demands. They are great athletes.

Debbie: Triathletes are the best; they have to master, train and compete in three very different sports.

Carley: Figure skaters, and Evan Lysacek in particular.

Ellen: I say figure skating. After watching skating and having done all sports from marathons, gymnastics, swimming, equestrian, skating is the most challenging.

Ken: The best athletes are pole vaulters: strength, speed, agility. Remember Superstars on TV? Pole vaulters won numerous times (athletes from different sports competing against each other.)

Steve: Hockey. Constant speed, explosive, agility.

Gerry: Those tennis players are the best athletes.

Like I said, everyone has an opinion. At top levels, they're all great athletes.

Dr. Weil is a sports podiatrist from Naperville with an office in Aurora. You can hear him on his weekly radio show at 6:30 p.m. Thursdays on 90.9-FM. Contact him at drrweilsportsdoctor@yahoo.com and visit his website at sportsdoctorradio.com.