

kids'day

Produced by Susan Hayes

Play for Fun

AN ESTIMATED 70 PERCENT of kids drop out of organized sports by the time they become teenagers. Many are burnt out from the pressure put on them by parents and coaches to perform well and to win, says Bob Bigelow, a former NBA player, youth coach and coauthor of *Just Let the Kids Play*. To help ensure your child has a safe and fun sports experience:

Ask the coach questions. How much playing time does each child get? How are practices structured? Avoid programs that scrutinize how well each child plays or emphasize winning. Instead, look for ones where the focus is on learning and having fun, says Bigelow.

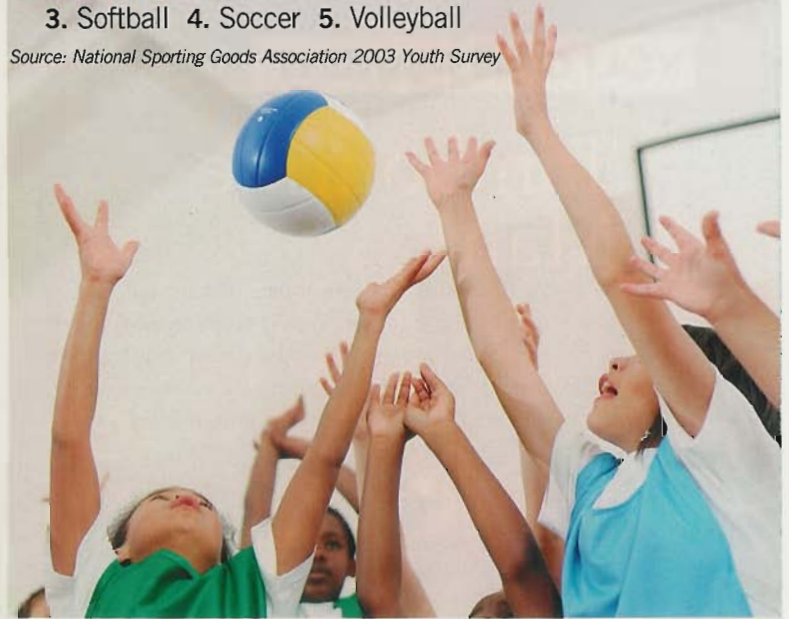
Be wary of elite "travel teams." Kids who don't make these teams at an early age are often discouraged from continuing the sport. "It elevates one group at the risk of ostracizing others," says JoAnn Rohyans, M.D., of the Central Ohio Pediatric Society. Even when kids do make the team, lengthy seasons and intense practices often take the fun out of the game. Also, as the amount of time and money parents invest in these teams increases, so do emotions. The frequent end result? Adults behaving badly on the sidelines.

Realize that kids develop at different times. "Don't worry if your child doesn't make the team in middle school," says Dr. Rohyans. "He still may have a chance later on. In many cases, a player who is good in high school wasn't even on the eighth grade team."

Don't believe starting younger and training harder is better. Kids don't have to begin playing a sport at a tender age to make the varsity team, win a college scholarship or even

Got Game? The top five team sports kids play: 1. Basketball 2. Baseball 3. Softball 4. Soccer 5. Volleyball

Source: National Sporting Goods Association 2003 Youth Survey



become a professional athlete, says Bigelow, who didn't play on a basketball team until he was 14. And in reality, a child athlete's chances of going on to play professionally are around one in 100,000.

Make sure coaches are trained to work effectively with kids. The fact that a person played a sport in high school doesn't make her qualified to coach a kids' team. Coaches need training in the sport's fundamentals, child development, age appropriateness and physical fitness.

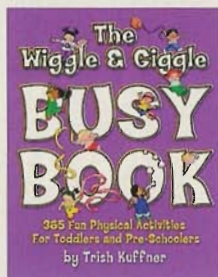
Encourage young children to try many different sports. Later they can tell you what they enjoy. When kids are involved in a variety of activities, the risk of overuse injuries, such as stress fractures and "Little League elbow," decreases.

Let kids return to the sandlot. When kids organize and play games on their own, they learn valuable skills, including settling disputes and making and interpreting rules.

Lori Murray

we love it!
all aboard!

Keep young children moving and shaking every day of the year with *The Wiggle & Giggle Busy Book*: **365 Fun Physical Activities for Toddlers and Pre-Schoolers** (\$9.95). Kids will want to get off the couch to play games and do activities like Sprinkler Aerobics, River Jump and Egg Roll. Bonus: They help keep parents in shape, too. To order, call toll-free 800-338-2232 or log on to www.meadowbrookpress.com.



Activities 1 **Choco-licious.** If you're looking for an excuse to make—or eat—chocolate, mark your calendar for August 4. It's National Chocolate Chip Day. You'll find enough recipes in *A Baker's Field Guide to Chocolate Chip Cookies* to make 75 different

kinds. **2** Hang time. National KidsDay is August 7.

Celebrate and honor your kids with the gift of meaningful time together. **3** Aloha! Hawaii

became our nation's 50th state on August 20, 1959. Blend some tropical fruit smoothies or host an outdoor luau to celebrate. Log on to www.alohafriendsluau.com for fun tips on how to throw a real Hawaiian bash.



Please turn to page 150

tip Build family memories by getting everyone involved in physical activities.