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Positive parental involvement in youth sports through the use of a practical intervention strategy

Lori B. Naber
The University of Montana

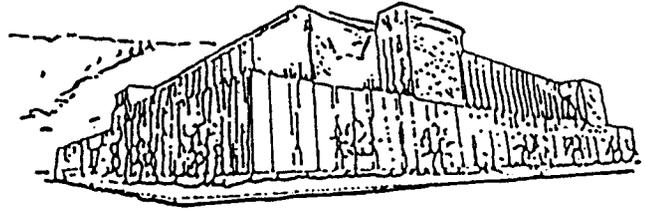
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Positive Parental Involvement in Youth Sports
Through the Use of a Practical Intervention Strategy

by

Lori B. Naber

B.S. The University of Montana, 1994

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

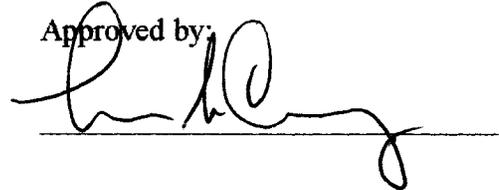
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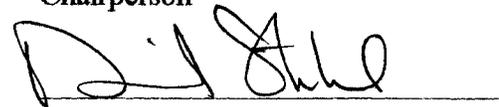
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Dean, Graduate School

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***Proposal format adopted from NCAA CHOICES Grant Program, MONTS (National Science Foundation) Grant Program, and with the approval of HHP advisor.**

**Positive Parental Involvement in Youth Sports
Through the Use of a Practical Intervention Strategy**

A Grant Proposal

**Lori B. Naber, ATC
Graduate Student
The University of Montana**

Positive Parental Involvement in Youth Sports Through the Use of a Practical Intervention Strategy

Director: Dr. Lewis A. Curry 

The purpose of this grant proposal is to create a packaged program that can be implemented by communities to offer a group intervention educational model regarding parental involvement in youth sports (ages 9 - 12). Parents are among the most influential adults involved in youth sports. The majority of parents understand that youth sports is based on fun and skill development, but increasingly parents focus on competition at early ages. This focus on competition can pose both physical and psychological problems to the participants. This educational intervention model will assist coaches and youth sport organizations in educating parents regarding the importance of positive involvement, including a focus on fun and appropriate conduct. The program will consist of: (1) mandatory pre-seasonal meetings; (2) instructional pamphlets outlining objectives, expectations, and goals of the program; and (3) a 15 minute video addressing problems and possible solutions associated with youth sports. The grant proposal is to develop the pamphlet and video, and provide guidelines for conducting the parental pre-season meetings. It is expected that parents and youth sport organizations will be exposed to important issues regarding youth sports and will be educated to manage these issues in a positive experience.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Before organized youth sports, parents were rarely involved in the games children played. Through the introduction of Little League, adults took control of child's play with the intention of making it safer. Child's play occurs on a level where reality doesn't have to be faced, but some sport researchers believe adults have destroyed this with structured play (Martens, 1978 and Hopper, 1988). In the past, organized youth sport programs used sport to prepare boys for war, but today these programs often lack objectives (Brown & Brata, 1988). Parents have also turned youth sports into an extrinsic seeking experience by offering rewards and trophies instead of seeking fun (Hopper, 1988). Instead of learning skills needed to settle differences children often watch adults display unruly behavior (Feldman, 1989).

The introduction of organized youth sports has increased the number of injuries seen by physicians and athletic trainers (Galton, 1980). Many of these injuries can cause long-term disabilities, while others can result in death. Hellstedt, Rooks & Watson (1988) have also seen excessive anxiety, aggressive behavior, and a decrease in self esteem in some athletes due to early participation. Sport psychologists have shown intense commitment to sports at young ages produces gastrointestinal problems, decreased appetites, insomnia, and antisocial behaviors in children (Rowly, 1987). Youth sports

often promote unhealthy social interactions and experiences which result in poor intellectual development and seclusion from the larger society (Smoll, Magill, & Ash, 1988). Drug use and social deviance have also been seen in young children when there is an emphasis put on winning (Nixon II, 1976).

As a result of childhood experiences in sport, people either dislike or assume the role as participant or fan (Simon, 1991). A study done with sixty 15 year old elite skiers found that 43% were pushed by their parents to compete and 12% were forced to compete (Hellstedt, 1988). Another study of U.S. nationally ranked swimmers found 50% quit within four years and 80% of those who quit did so because of external pressure (Eitzen & Sage, 1993). Most children do not have the physical or emotional maturity to accept the responsibility placed on them during organized youth sports (Purdy, 1987).

Often, parents live vicariously through their children. Parents interpret failure as a reflection of their own ability (Eitzen & Sage, 1993 and Smith, Smoll & Smith, 1989). Parents have been known to do almost anything to get an edge for their young athlete. Not only have parents enrolled their children in sport camps and competition at early ages, but they have also held their children back grade levels in school so they will be older and stronger than other athletes (Michner, 1975). The media is filled with negative examples of parental involvement in youth sports. In Texas, a mother was found guilty of plotting to

murder a cheerleader and her mother in order for her daughter to make the cheer squad (Curtis, 1991 & Hewitt, 1991). In New Mexico, the father of a high school football player admitted to sharpening a buckle on his son's football helmet, because officials failed to penalize players in an earlier game for roughing up his son (Missouliau, October 23, 1996). In California, a mother is suing the school district because her daughter didn't make the cheer squad (Missouliau, October 18, 1996). In Hawaii, parents of a Pee Wee football team invaded another community with bats and lead pipes after a game (Smith, Smoll & Smith, 1989). In Oklahoma, a mother of a Little League player shot the aunt of another player after she made a comment about her son and stood trial for murder (Smith, Smoll & Smith, 1989). In New York City, some high school basketball games are played in locked gyms to protect players and officials (Smith, Smoll & Smith, 1989).

Professional athletes, such as Tiffany Chin, quit sports because they no longer tolerated pressure from their parents (Ryan, 1995). Other athletes, like Tonya Harding, were physically abused by their parents for making mistakes (Ryan, 1995). Carol Stack bribed her daughter to attend gymnastics practice and threatened to hit her if the bribes failed (Ryan, 1995). At the time her daughter quit gymnastics she was diagnosed with eighteen fractures (Ryan, 1995). Gymnast Amy Jackson, before attempting suicide, was diagnosed as manic-depressive due to child abuse and abandonment from her parents

(Ryan, 1995).

The most publicized case is that of Marv Marinovich. Marv's quest to build the ultimate quarterback resulted in a team of thirteen experts to work with his son, including an ophthalmologist to expand his peripheral vision (Loftgren, 1986 & Looney, 1988). Marv's son, Todd, was bred from the time of conception to be an elite athlete, but emotional stress resulted in cocaine use and a suspension from the NFL (Plummer, 1991). Tennis prodigy Jennifer Capriati also had a controlling father and found herself in trouble with drugs as a result of excessive pressure in sports (Jones, 1996, Reed, 1994, Preston 1994a & 1994b).

This type of neurotic parental behavior is becoming more prevalent. Parents can be observed at any Little League game or Pee Wee soccer game displaying irrational behavior. A study by USA Today (1990) found 37% of children surveyed wished their parents wouldn't watch their games (Wolff, 1993). It has been found that many of these organized sport experiences are identical to adult programs. Rules, skills, and competition are similar to high school, college or professional levels (National Alliance for Youth Sport, 1987). Rotella & Bunker (1987) found that many parents get upset because their children display feelings of happiness after a loss. Occasionally this results in physical abuse as well as verbal abuse. Parents increasingly display the Vince Lombardi attitude that "Winning isn't

everything, it's the only thing" (Martens, 1978).

Unfortunately, what parents don't understand is that early athletic success doesn't guarantee future success. Statistics show only 25% of youth baseball stars will excel in high school baseball (Wolff, 1993). Many professional athletes did not excel in sports until their late teens. Running back Herschel Walker was unable to out run his sister until he was sixteen and Michael Jordan didn't even make the high school basketball team until he was a junior (Wolff, 1993). In fact, it has been found that physical and motor development required to excel at football develops between the ages of 18-25 (Purdy, 1987). Every child varies in his or her ability to play sports, so parents need to remember that children will develop athletic interests and skills at their own pace.

Child labor laws prevent children from working and the NCAA prevents athletes from practicing more than twenty hours a week, but youth sports are not regulated and some athletes practice forty or more hours a week (Ryan, 1995). In the past there have been a number of booklets and posters produced on parent responsibility, but it is unclear how these were distributed or if they are valid (Smoll, Magill & Ash, 1988). Several books have also been written to educate parents regarding their child's involvement in sports, but most focus on the parent as a coach, not the spectator. Researchers Martens & Seefeldt (1981) have developed minimum guidelines and the Bill of Rights for Athletes, but these

have yet to be nationally instituted. One contrary positive example is in Haltisburg, Mississippi, where programs are not based upon winning, but focus on developmental guidelines and parent clinics (ManuLife & NASPE, 1977). National associations are beginning to require coaches and officials to regularly attend educational clinics and seminars, but parents have little knowledge about their role in their child's sport experience.

The introduction of organized youth sports was based on sound objectives and principles, but years of adult influence have directed youth sports away from these objectives and principles. This grant proposal suggested a program which is relevant in maintaining the mental and physical well-being of all children involved in youth sports. For most children, their experiences in youth sports are enjoyable, but for some, extreme physical and psychological stress placed upon them by parents potentially creates detrimental life long effects. Education is the first step in the prevention of these unnecessary effects and the promotion of positive experiences in youth sports. This program plans to identify problems in youth sports and provide adults with information and guidelines to enhance their child's experience while involved in youth sports.

Brata & Brown (1988) found that parents are one of the most prominent influences involved in their child's youth sport experience. As a result of this the attitudes parents

display toward their child and their participation in sports can contribute to the experience a child has in youth sports. Recently, few organizations have outlined program objectives and informed parents about their role in youth sports to promote a safe and positive experience.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The purpose of this program is to offer a group intervention educational model regarding parental involvement in youth sports. This program will involve youth sport organizers, coaches, parents, and athletes in hopes of creating a positive experience through the use of a mandatory pre-seasonal meeting, informational pamphlets, and an educational video.

GRANT OBJECTIVES

- 1) To create a program that offers a group intervention educational model regarding parental involvement in youth sports. This program will consist of a structured implementation, informational pamphlets, and an educational video.
- 2) To market and promote the implementation of this structured program within local communities and youth sport organizations.

- 3) To advise youth sport organizations and local communities regarding the potential negative influences of parents in youth sports participants.
- 4) To implement this structured program in local communities and use it as a future model for other communities.
- 5) Compare local communities that implement this program with similar communities that do not use any intervention programs.

OBJECTIVES For Youth Sport Administrators

OVERALL PROGRAM

- 1) Youth Sport Administrators will understand goals and objectives of program.
- 2) Youth Sport Administrators in a given community will implement and promote the parental intervention program.
- 3) Youth Sport Administrators will encourage the promotion of fun and safety in youth sports.

PRE-SEASONAL MEETING

- 1) Youth Sport Administrators will secure a facility with ample seating for athletes and their parents.

- 2) Youth Sports Administrators will require all parents of registering athletes to attend informational meeting.
- 3) Youth Sport Administrators will distribute a written program evaluation at the conclusion of the meeting.

INFORMATIONAL PAMPHLETS

- 1) Youth Sport Administrators will address goals, objectives and conduct policies for their organization.
- 2) Parents will understand goals, objectives and conduct policies of the organization.
- 3) Youth Sport Administrators will have pamphlets professionally printed through a local printer.
- 4) Youth Sport Administrators will distribute and discuss informational pamphlets to parents.

EDUCATIONAL VIDEO

- 1) Youth Sport Administrators will purchase and promote the program from primary investigator.
- 2) Youth Sport Administrators and parents will understand physical and psychological dangers of early participation and specialization.

- 3) Youth Sport Administrators and parents will be aware of the potential for injuries and means to prevent them.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The program proposed in this grant is aimed at assisting communities and sport administrators with youth sports for children ages 9-12 in educating parents of these young athletes. The target market is local organizations governing and managing Youth Sport Organizations within the community. It is hoped this program encourages all parents to focus on fun rather than competition while their child is involved in youth sports.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

OVERALL PROJECT

- We will create and initiate the production of the instructional material packet for distribution to local communities one year prior to program implementation. This packet will contain instructions, pamphlets, a video, and evaluation forms..
- We will plan marketing and promotion strategies of the program within local communities six months prior to program implementation.
- We will monitor marketing and distribution of program materials to local

communities.

- We will create and arrange for printing of program evaluation forms through The University of Montana Printing and Graphic Services.
- We will collect necessary data throughout the summer season (June - August). Data will be input into a computer and appropriate statistics will be used to formulate evaluative results.

PRE-SEASON MEETING

- We will integrate the use of written and audio-visual material to present the information to parents of young athletes participating in youth sports during the summer.
- We will provide written instructions to all youth sports officials regarding presentation of program material at pre-seasonal meeting.

INFORMATIONAL PAMPHLETS

- We will create and develop the informational pamphlet and arrange for professional typesetting and printing through The University of Montana Printing and Graphic Services. Additional printing will be the responsibility of the Youth Sport Organization.

EDUCATIONAL VIDEO

- We will arrange for video personnel and actors from The University of Montana Performing Arts and Radio & TV Center to assist with video production and provide a professional narrator.
- We will arrange for video production services at The University of Montana with KUFM-TV in Missoula, Mt.
- We will develop a marketing plan and arrange for video reproduction.
- We will use the following outline for the video production.

YOUTH SPORT INTERVENTION PROGRAM VIDEO

I. Introduction

- one minute scroll of facts and history regarding youth sports
 - 20 million children participate in youth sports every year.

II. Brief Personal Accounts

- 30 second brief segment focusing on a well known athlete who had a positive experience in youth sports.
- 30 second brief segment focusing on a well known athlete who had a negative experience in youth sports.

III. Picture Examples

- 30 seconds of actual footage of parents displaying irrational or improper behavior.

IV. Professional Expert

- 2 minute segment discussing actual headlines, examples and studies with facts and statistics.

V. Case Studies

- 3 minute segment examining in further detail the experiences of the two athletes previewed earlier in the video.

VI. Professional Expert

- 2 minute segment discussing reasons for parental attitudes and behavior.

VII. Address Specific Problems

- a 1 minute segment on burnout in athletes
- a 1 minute segment on injury
- a 1 minute segment on psychological problems

VIII. Conclusion

- 2 minutes of key points that parents should remember

IX. Picture Examples

- 30 seconds of closing footage while credits appear showing actual examples of negative parental involvement.

TIMELINE

Beginning Phase (Summer 1998; 12 months prior to season)

- 1) Initiate production of instructional material
- 2) Initiate video production at The University of Montana KUFM-TV
- 3) Develop and print written evaluation forms

Middle Phase (Winter 1998-99; 6-9 months prior to season)

- 1) Complete instructional material printing
- 2) Complete video production
- 3) Develop marketing and promotion plan

Late Phase (Summer 1999; 3 months in-season)

- 1) Monitor objectives and goals of program
- 2) Evaluate conduct of participants

Ending Phase (Fall 1999; 3-6 months post-season)

- 1) Complete evaluation assessment and compile data
- 2) Formulate process and impact conclusions based on data

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Formative Evaluation: The primary goal of the formative evaluation will be to improve the quality of the program. The following procedures will be followed to improve the quality of the program while it is being developed and implemented. A pilot study will be used to assess and improve the program prior to distribution.

- 1) Education of youth sport administrators will be assessed for quality, with special attention given to knowledge of issues surrounding youth sports, such as burnout, injury and psychological problems through an informal questionnaire following a pilot of the program.**
- 2) Quality of video and printed material will be assessed for presentation, knowledge and effectiveness through an informal evaluation questionnaire distributed during a pilot video to parents.**
- 3) Quality of overall program will be accessed from feedback received from evaluation questionnaire compiled during a pilot study. Questionnaire will inquire about program objectives and goals, presentation format, information presented, and suggestions to improve the program.**
- 4) At first community introduction, process and products will be assessed**

through a written evaluation.

Impact Evaluation: The primary goal of the impact evaluation will be to assess the effectiveness of the program

- 1) Perceptions of the program by participants will be assessed by a questionnaire based on a 5 point Likert scale. Data analysis will consist of accepted statistical procedures.
- 2) Participant behavior and conduct will be objectively assessed throughout the season by the primary investigator and compared to a similar community not using the program.
- 3) Youth Sport Administrators will be surveyed as to the effectiveness of the program through a written questionnaire.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF EXPECTED RESULTS

The practical application of the expected results is to continue providing this intervention program beyond the granting period to various communities. The initial funding provided by this grant will permit the development and purchasing of necessary materials needed to initiate this program. The program itself is designed to be continued with little additional cost or at costs supported by the communities requesting the service. It is hoped the results of this program will demonstrate positive outcomes.

BUDGET INFORMATION

Equipment and Supplies

1) Development and Typesetting	\$750
2) Printing and Copying	\$750
3) Marketing to Community	\$750
4) Video Production	\$8,000

Personnel

1) Grant Administrator Salary	\$2,000
2) Video Production Personnel	\$2,000
3) Video Narrator and Staff	\$2,000
4) Administrative Support	\$750

Total **\$17,000**

JUSTIFICATION FOR BUDGET

Equipment and Supplies: Professional development and typesetting is requested at \$750 for the purpose of the developing the program instructional packet and evaluation questionnaires, since these resources are not available. Printing and copying supplies are

also requested at \$750 for the production of needed evaluation questionnaires and the instructional packet. An additional \$750 is requested to assist in duplicating pamphlets for distribution to local communities. Professional video production (Excluding personnel) is requested at \$8,000 since resources are not available. The University of Montana Television Productions Services (KUFM-TV) will be utilized.

Personnel: Video production personnel (\$2,000) is requested for assistance with development and editing of the video. The primary investigator's salary (\$2,000) is requested to conduct program training and data collection. Due to the nature of the video, \$2,000 is requested to provide the video with professional actors, actresses and a narrator. Administrative support (\$750) is requested to assist with the development and promotion of the program.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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PROFESSIONAL DEGREES

M.S., 1997 (pending) The University of Montana

B.S., 1994 The University of Montana

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1994-present Head Athletic Trainer, Hellgate High School

1993-1995 Summer Sports Camp Athletic Trainer, University of Montana

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND HONORS

1991-present National Athletic Trainers Association member

1993-present Montana Athletic Trainers Association member

1993-94 Nasby Rhinehart Outstanding Student Athletic Trainer

1991-94 First Bank System Scholarship Recipient

1990 Northern Montana Hospital Auxiliary Scholarship Recipient

1989 Northern Montana Hospital Volunteer of the Year Recipient

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