

Safety Health Publishing

Off the Job Safety - The Weekend Warrior Syndrome

With hockey season well under way, hospital emergency departments throughout the country will see the arrival of thousands of men between the ages of 30-55 years. They will be arriving in ambulances, taxi cabs and private vehicles to be treated for such injuries as lost teeth, separated shoulders, pulled groins, broken ankles, broken hands and countless other injuries. In their prime, many of these men were outstanding hockey players. As the years flew by, their bodies succumbed to time and the abuse they had put them through. They have lost their speed, flexibility and resiliency to injuries. The one thing they haven't lost is the memories of their greatness. This is why a man who may be forty pounds overweight and has done nothing for the past six months but drink beer and barbecue steaks will don the skates and play as if his livelihood depends on his ability to score goals. Hockey is not the only sport where this happens; there are weekend warriors in any sport.

Employers and insurance companies pay millions of dollars to men and women who have been injured when they were participating in some kind of sporting activities. They would like this to stop because it is costing too much money. As a paramedic, I have attended many situations where a so-called friendly game got out of hand. Where else but a hockey rink or a playing field can you get a bunch of sober, mature men who for the past ten years have been telling their children to stay out of fights, drop their gloves and start wailing on each others heads with their fists? If the participants of the fight don't make it into work the next day because of an injury, the surprise is on the employer. In most cases they will have to pay for him to stay home until he can return to work.

I am not saying not to play hard, but keep the following tips and suggestion in mind:

1. **Keep Things In Perspective.**

One man was playing a scrub game of hockey when he decided to block a shot that an opposing player was going to take. The man was wearing little equipment. The puck hit him in the jaw breaking it and knocking out several teeth.

This little act of dedication to the game cost this man a lot. Keep things in perspective. If you're not making your living in professional sports, you probably don't have to take the game too seriously. Keep this thought in mind. It is only a game.

2. **Prepare For Your Sport**

Many people will participate in one seasonal sport. The rest of the year they will do nothing that will sustain their level of fitness. Downhill skiing is a good example. People will drag out their skis from the garage. Pile the family into the

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car and drive out to the mountains, go up the chairlift and then come down the first black diamond run they can find. Often the results are disastrous. Take the time to train for the sport. Start a pre-season exercise program that will exercise the muscles you will be using for that particular sport, and remember, don't over do it.

3. Warmup For All Activities.

Whether it's hockey, skiing, baseball or jogging; it is important to warmup before you start. Stretch those muscles and warmup before you start. Professional athletes do it and they are younger and fitter than most of us. You should do it too.

4. Wear The Proper Gear

Just as we tell our children to wear their helmets when riding their bicycles or roller blading; it's important that we do the same. In some sports more equipment is needed other than a helmet. Common injuries for roller blading include broken wrists and knee injuries. Obtain and wear the protective gear that is recommended for the sport.

5. Keep Your Ego In Check

As your children age, they usually get stronger and more fit. Before you know it they can run circles around you or throw you around in a play-wrestling match. Accept it. Sooner or later they will surpass you in physical abilities. At times you can see this at a family reunion where the "older" guys will challenge the teenagers to a football game. Often these games can get out of hand and the members of older team are extremely sore the next day. Don't let your ego make you do things you'll be sorry for later.

6. Listen To Your Body

When you are playing these sports and your body starts to ache or you feel you have stretched something, stop. It will hurt a lot more the next morning. When you're fifty-five the aches and pains hurt more and last longer than when you were twenty-one. Remember, if you ever have chest pain no matter how slight it may be, seek medical help immediately, you may be having a heart attack.

These are just a few tips to keep in mind. And remember if you are too sore for the next game, it's no big deal. Have fun.

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Page 2