

# The New York Times

LETTERS SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2003

## Are Team Sports Hurting Kids?

To the Editor:

Re "As Team Sports Conflict, Some Parents Rebel" (front page, Nov. 12):

It has turned out to be a blessing that my children had no interest in organized sports. Skiing, sledding, hiking, biking and swimming have provided them ample opportunities to exercise and practice social skills — at times of our choosing.

The entire family has benefited from our relaxed schedule, and since we parents often participate (instead of simply chauffeuring and watching from the sidelines), it's helped us to stay fit and active as well.

While I'm happy for families who enjoy having their kids on teams, my suggestion to my children when they have their own families will be this: Consider keeping your children barely aware that organized sports even exist!

If they choose to home-school, the way I did, this won't be so difficult to do.

PATRICIA SETTE  
Sterling, Mass., Nov. 12, 2003

To the Editor:

Judging from your article on youth team sports (front page, Nov. 12), one would think that it's a miracle I made it out of athletics alive.

You seem to think that busy teenage athletes are some kind of menace to themselves and their families. That is hardly the case. Besides, the rewards can be monumental.

I swam from age 8 until 23, was both a high school and collegiate All-American, earned a full college scholarship, and learned a few life lessons along the way.

So what if swimming and school left little time for other pursuits? Such focus is the price of competition, and I wouldn't trade those years for anything.

GLENN PEOPLES  
Brooklyn, Nov. 12, 2003

To the Editor:

As a senior at Northwestern University and a former Division I athlete, I am only beginning to realize what I sacrificed by dedicating my youth to sports (front page, Nov. 12).

My parents let us choose our level of athletic involvement. I made sports my life; my brothers didn't. My older brother has traveled around the world; I have played soccer.

As a child, I didn't go on family vacations because I thought I couldn't miss my games. I never realized what I was missing until my Division I soccer career ended a year early.

Since retirement, I have founded a nonprofit group, worked as a volunteer and found time to read. I still play soccer two or three days a week, but now I have a life outside sports.

SUSAN COELIUS KEPLINGER  
Evanston, Ill., Nov. 12, 2003

To the Editor:

Re "As Team Sports Conflict, Some Parents Rebel" (front page, Nov. 12):

As a former college soccer player who has coached elementary school-aged children, I question whether travel teams are in any way beneficial for younger children.

When young athletes play in an increasing number of serious games, there is a tendency to experiment less and less. The freedom and joy of trying out new moves — common experiences in pickup games — are replaced by the pressure to stick with the tried and true in an effort to win cup matches.

At 50 years old, I still play pickup soccer with other "old-timers" who share my love of the game. I wonder how many of today's young athletes will do the same when they reach that age.

FRED CANTOR  
Westport, Conn., Nov. 12, 2003