Preventing Testicle Injuries in Youth Players: A Common Sense Approach

Contrary to common sense, every season a large percentage of youth players across the United States routinely wear boxer shorts and nothing else under their uniform shorts during active participation in soccer. Obviously, they don't think twice about it, and take for granted that their testicles will not be injured during play. Well, they may need to be reminded that soccer is a **contact** sport, and the chance of injuries does exist.

Yes, I know that this topic is embarrassing and it's rarely talked about, but that doesn't make it any less serious. Every season I'm called upon to assess and manage several soccer-related testicle injuries; four players from the same club sustained such injuries one year during the Tampa Bay Sunbowl Tournament in Florida.

The solution to this problem is really quite simple and inexpensive—wearing an athletic supporter ('jock') during every practice session and game. Despite this common sense approach to injury prevention, many youth players are very reluctant about wearing a jock—

"It's too confining";
"I don't like the way it feels";
"Soccer players just don't wear jocks";
"It takes away the freedom";
"It rubs a rash"

I've heard them all, and as far as I'm concerned, it's time to move beyond the boxer shorts...and the excuses. As an Athletic Trainer, one of my responsibilities is the prevention of soccer injuries. So from that perspective, here is my recommendation: a jock should be worn as a part of the uniform by all players in the U15-U19 age groups; some younger players may also need to wear a jock, and this should be determined on an individual basis. If this common sense approach to injury prevention is to be effective, it should be supported wholeheartedly by coaches and parents. If not, players will continue to be at risk for potentially serious injuries.

One final note. In the event that a testicle injury does occur, it should be assessed immediately by an experienced athletic trainer or physician. These injuries are not to be ignored! If not assessed and managed promptly, some injuries may result in sterility or the loss of a testicle. Enough said.