



January 12, 2010

The National Athletic Trainers' Association spearheaded the Alliance to Address the Youth Sport Safety Crisis in America and created a call to action to raise awareness, advance legislation and improve medical care for young athletes across the country. We are delighted to encourage discussion and change at the January 12, 2010, Summit and media event in Sacramento, California. Nearly 30 other organizations have indicated their participation, support and commitment through letters.

With nearly 7 million high school students participating in sports today, there are a reported 715,000 high school sport-related injuries experienced each year. It is time to reduce those numbers. It is time to improve the health and safety of our young athletes.

Because youth athletes today continue to play more sports – or one sport at a more intense level of play – they are experiencing chronic and sometimes catastrophic injuries which could sideline them for a season – or a lifetime. Each and every day we read, see and hear about brain injuries and concussion, sudden cardiac arrest and exertional heat illnesses, among other conditions, experienced on the youth sport playing field. Many are preventable and treatable if the athlete has access to the right health care professional.

Many of us are familiar with the name Max Gilpin. Max was a young Kentucky athlete who died last year during a high school football practice. He is a tragic and compelling example of a trend taking place across the country. The statistics are staggering: more than 115 sport-related youth deaths since January 2008. Not all of these could have been avoided but many of them could have been prevented.

Even for injuries that are not life-threatening, the potential time lost in school and cost of care can be significant. What will they have longer – their trophies or their injuries?

We also know that there has been significant attention on professional athletes today and the impact of repeat injuries on their lives. This is particularly true in the NFL and NHL where retired players have shown signs of dementia and related conditions. The policy changes made on the professional sports level have influenced colleges and high schools to consider similar changes. We applaud this direction and know many of our collective members are involved in those discussions.

We are delighted to join forces with so many other committed organizations and individuals. We want Americans to know there are solutions to this crisis. Today's Summit provides a forum for discussion among health care experts, legislators, parents and a student athlete that will bring this compelling health issue to life. The Alliance members here and, hopefully many more in the future, will work to improve youth sport safety.

Together we can make a difference. Together we can improve the lives of our young athletes. Together, we will help them excel on the field, set new records, enjoy the exhilaration that comes with fair play and sports participation. Together we can ensure their health care and wellness for generations to come.

On behalf of the members and Board of Directors of the National Athletic Trainers' Association,

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President