

A COACH'S PRIMER ON SUPERVISION

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High school coaches differ from most other professionals in the way they must handle their role as supervisors. That's according to Dr. Richard P. Borkowski, a sports-safety expert and director of athletics at the Episcopal Academy, Merion, PA. Our legal system sometimes takes a different view of what, is or is not proper supervision in the coaching world," he adds. "Many coaches may think supervision is a piece of cake, but that's not the case." He points to the following "deviations" from proper supervision and advises on ways to deal with them:

- **Not being there.** "You are in a no-win situation if you are not present when a player is injured," Dr. Borkowski says.
- **Failing to control the situation.** "Being there is only the start. You are there, but shooting the breeze with the opposing coach as 'horseplay' occurs around the shot-put area often results in an injury. I've seen a coach get in trouble for failing to wear a whistle, based on the theory that the sound of the whistle would have prevented an injury to a player who used a football blocking sled without wearing his helmet."
- **Lacking a knowledge in the activity you are supervising.** " You're a great basketball coach. Are you qualified to cover a practice for the sick swim coach?"
- **Not being taught how to supervise.** "Think about it. Has anyone actually taught you the best place to stand or how to rotate when coaching? Where do you spot for the "Banzai" flip off the balance beam? Take time at your next meeting to review the art of supervision."
- **Being distracted.** "A well-intentioned coach was supervising a physical-education softball game when a girl from his tennis team asked for advice. As the coach helped his player, a batter, not wearing a helmet at the time, was hit in the head. The coach was not aware of what happened, because he was helping another student."