

## PREFACE

As organized and recreational sports become more popular in the United States and around the world, the field of sports medicine continues to expand and occupy an important role in both improving the level of play and increasing safety for millions of athletes. Although most sporting injuries involve the extremities or major joints, up to 40% of athletic injuries involve the head or spine. This puts physicians, athletic trainers, and other health care professionals in a position of being able to contribute their unique professional knowledge to the diagnosis and treatment of these injured athletes.

Recent events in professional and college sports have led to a more widespread recognition that serious injuries often occur during athletic endeavors. Concussion and spinal injuries can impact not only the player's immediate performance but also can result in more serious, long-term consequences, such as suboptimal on-field performance, premature retirement, and persistent physical and/or emotional difficulties following retirement.

Today's athletes are larger, stronger, and faster. This places them at increased risk for high-velocity collisions that may result in injury to the central nervous system. Furthermore, recreational sports such as snow skiing, in-line skating, bicycle riding, and skateboarding have also continued to place the "weekend athlete" at risk for serious injury or even death.

Interest in and research on the basic and clinical science of head injury in athletes is growing, and athletic trainers and team physicians are becoming more involved in the care of players with central nervous system injuries. Dedicated scientific forums have arisen as a place to present and share knowledge and experience between the clinicians and researchers. This book was conceived out of a conference that was

held in March of 1996 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The conference was the first cross-disciplinary attempt to confront the many difficult issues regarding the evaluation and treatment of sport-related concussion. Some 220 neurosurgeons, neurologists, neuropsychologists, and athletic trainers braved the snowy Pittsburgh winter to share the most current and vital information available concerning the effects of concussion on athletes.

Since that meeting and the subsequent national conference held in 1997 in Orlando, Florida, we have worked with the most knowledgeable professionals to assemble the best of the presentations into this book. Each major topic covered at the conferences has been updated to represent the state-of-the-art diagnosis and treatment of central nervous system injuries in athletes.

We anticipate further advances in the broad field of sports medicine that will result in improved methods of caring for injured athletes. We hope this book will be both a stimulus for further understanding and a valuable resource to those involved in the fields of neurosurgery, neuropsychology, and athletic training. We look forward to increasing the participation of the various specialties in clinical research and investigation to reduce the incidence of chronic disability in athletes as a result of injury to the brain and spine.

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