

SnowsportGB

Aspects of Child Welfare



September 2007

Acknowledgements

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- <http://www.thecpsu.org.uk>
The (CPSU) is a partnership in England, Wales and N. Ireland between the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Sport England, the Sports Council for Northern Ireland and the Sports Council for Wales. In Scotland it is a partnership with Children 1st and Sport Scotland. The Unit was founded in 2001 to co-ordinate and support sports organisations' implementation of the 2000 National Action Plan for Child Protection in Sport.





Definition of a Child

- In England and Wales, a child is anyone under the age of 18
- Performance vs. welfare
- At the core of the sport are the relationships between coach, athlete and parents – crucial not only for athlete development, but also for the general well-being and personal development of the athlete/child

Overview...

- Children/young people have the right to have fun and be safe in sport
- Child protection is about best practice in sport
- Sport provides easy access to someone who wants to harm children
- Close proximity of instructors and members places children and adults in vulnerable situations
- Sport is uniquely placed to contribute to safeguarding the welfare of children

Aims of this presentation...

- To give an understanding of the issues
- To outline and define roles and responsibilities of the organisation and the individual
- ...in terms of
 - ◆ Policy development
 - ◆ Practicalities of working with children in a professional and safe manner
- ...Eagle or Ostrich???





Overview of SnowsportGB's Child Protection Policy

- Promoting good practice
- Defining child abuse
- Recognition of signs of abuse, vigilance
- Outlining procedures and action
- Guide to safe recruitment
- Protecting yourself...
- Sport-specific aspects

◆ <http://www.gbjuniorski.com/CPPSSGBDec06ModApr07C.pdf>

Some commonsense...

- Policies and paperwork for safeguarding?
- Good practice is what protects children...
- The policies are there to define and support good practice.

Defining the problem

- Canada (Kirby and Greaves 1996 – study of 1200 elite and recently retired Olympic athletes)
22% of respondents reported sexual intercourse with an authority figure (elite sport level), 8.6% forced
- Norway (Fasting, Brackenridge & Sundgot-Borgen 2000, study of 660 top female athletes)
51% Elite athletes experience sexual abuse or harassment
- Australia (Leahy, Pretty & Tenenbaum 2001 – retrospective study of over 2000 male/female athletes)
21.9% elite athletes experience sexual abuse in their lives (46% of these by sports personnel)
17.7% club athletes experience abuse (25.6% of these by sports personnel)
- UK No current research - but 'In at the Deep End' (NSPCC / CPSU study of cases in swimming) confirms previous research findings.

What is abusive behaviour?

Emotional Abuse

- Constant criticism, ridicule, humiliation
- Emotional well-being tied to performance
- Emotional abuse sets a context where other forms of abuse are more likely to occur
- “Every time I compete he’s there and he criticises me.... he’s just pulling me down.... He writes me letters saying that I’ve got no ability... because he still wants to manipulate me” *(female survivor of sexual abuse in sport)*
Brackenridge 2001.

Physical Abuse

- All forms of physical maltreatment and assaults
- Excessively intense training
- Administering / encouraging use of performance enhancing drugs
- “He had full control over the team and if you didn’t comply you were off the team... he would do things just to prove that he had control over you. He would make you do ridiculous things, things that you were afraid of (like training) in the thunder and lightning storms or, you know, going out in snow blizzards and run ten miles”. *(female survivor of sexual abuse in sport) Brackenridge 2001.*

Physical Contact - Good Practice

- Physical contact should be for one of the following purposes
 - ★ to develop or demonstrate sports skills
 - ★ to diagnose or treat an injury
 - ★ To give appropriate sport massage
- Physical contact is appropriate in other circumstances, as in consoling a child who is upset, or administering first aid. Always ensure a culture of openness.
- These should only be carried out by appropriately qualified staff
- Remember that interpretations of touching will be affected by factors such as cultural differences, religious implications, relative age, sexual orientation etc

Sexual Abuse

- All forms of sexual exploitation
- Abuse of power and positions of trust

“I never told anyone, since I believed it to be part and parcel of training and necessary to become a success at a high level”. (*victim of abuse by a leading swimming coach*) Myers & Barrett 2002 - 'In at the Deep End'.

Neglect

- Deprivation of basic needs
- Failure to protect from abusive training conditions, injuries, accidents.

Bullying

- May be physical, verbal or emotional
- Is usually repeated over a period of time
- Is always distressing to the victim
- May involve staff, other athletes, or parents

- Signs may include a drop in performance, behavioural changes, mood swings, reluctance to train/compete, frequent loss of possessions, physical injuries (bruising, scratches, etc), poor sleep, loss of appetite/weight

- A firm anti-bullying policy is necessary

Positions of Trust - the Power of the Coach

- Power can be used positively or negatively
- Creates dependence for performance, selection, acceptance, sense of self reliance on coaches' approval
- Dependence of parents for their child to succeed
- Parents and athletes may be 'groomed' to accept abusive practice and behaviour as the price of success
- Impact of 'pushy' parents unable to separate child's success in sport from own needs i.e. praise and encouragement only linked to performance
- Difficulty / impossibility for athletes to report abuse
- Risks increase at point of pre-peak performance

Travel and Trips Away

Increased Risks

- Away from home, friends, family – homesickness
- Unfamiliar surroundings
- Dependence on others in positions of trust
- Standards of care may be lower
- Pressure to perform
- Abuse more likely to happen away from the sports venue
- Blurring of personal / professional boundaries in relationships

Best Practice – what to do...

- Codes of ethics and practice for all
- Athlete-centred coaching methods
- High quality education and training
- Child protection policies and procedures
- Open channels of communication with parents/carers
- Clear place for concerns to be raised
- Well publicised complaints and disciplinary procedures
- Designated persons for children and young people's welfare
- Safeguarding plans for away trips and travel
- Rigorous recruitment and selection processes
- Evidence based practice

Risks related to elite sport

Dilemmas

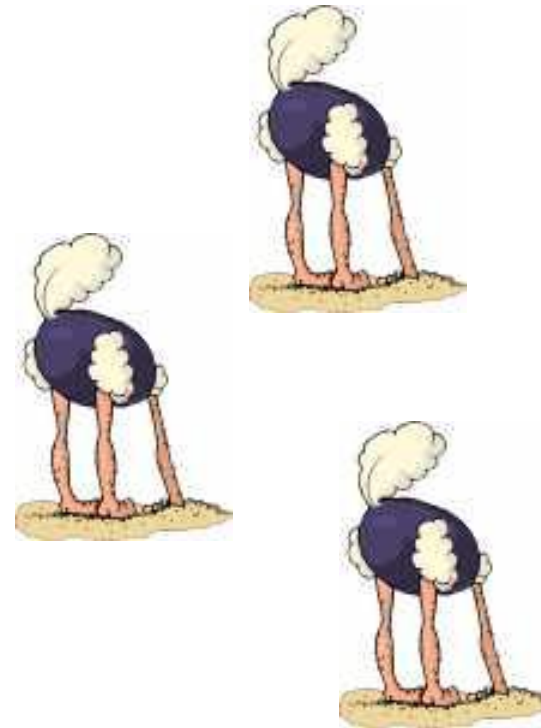
- Is it possible to coach young people to elite athlete status without abusing or harming them?
- How to define the thin line between intense training and abusive behaviour.

And again - Aims of this presentation...

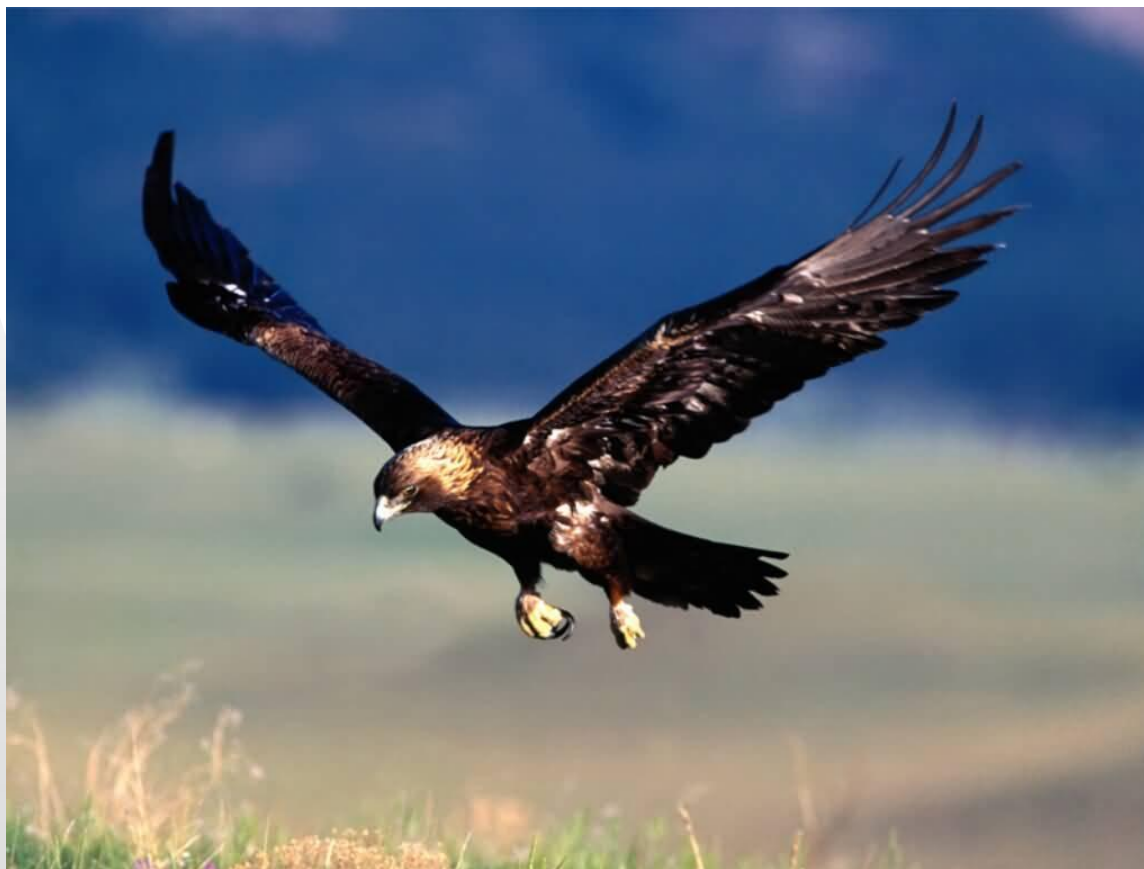
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Final Thought...

Are you an ostrich?



...or an eagle



Remember...

- The effects of abuse may have very long-lasting consequences for the child
- The welfare of the child is paramount
- A safe environment must be created
- The rights and wishes of children must be respected
- Children must be protected from harm, discrimination and degrading treatments

Their present
and future is
our concern....

