

Below you will find the first of many future learning opportunities. These are going to be short studies or articles that I have found very useful in educating coaches and parents. I don't intend to cause a stir, but some of the topics are fairly controversial in the youth sports world, especially in the baseball world. Please understand, my aim is to educate and any argument I make for or against anything is in the interest of your child's health and future success in whatever they chose to pursue. I don't invent or sell exercise equipment, nor do I distribute training programs for personal profit. So if I advocate for something or denounce it entirely, try to trust that I don't have a horse in the race and I'm purely making observations from what I experience every day in the clinic. Let's get to it...

### **Topic: The Impact of the Off-Season**

The offseason can be a confusing time. For those of you with athletes specialized to baseball, the questions can seem endless. What should they be doing to get better? Is it okay to weight train at their age? Should they take an extended break? A shorter break? NO BREAK?! And for those of you with multisport athletes, how much is too much when it comes to organized sports? Are they falling behind because they aren't playing as much baseball?

Below you will find some stuff to read. I will provide the grain of salt and hopefully some clarity as we go. Enjoy.

#### **Stuff you should read:**

- Journal of Sports Health (peer reviewed research journal from the American Orthopedic Society for Sports Medicine): [Alternative Solutions to Early Sport Specialization in Youth Athletes](#)

*While the aim of this study is to discuss sports specialization issues, the authors' points ring true for any athlete's off season. This is only the summary of the study to save you from wading through the scientific jargon.*

#### **Our thoughts...**

- 1. If your athlete doesn't play other sports, what are they doing with their down time?**
  - a. Things to encourage: go outside and play, find a training facility that works with kids, try other activities (archery, shooting, golf, ninja warrior, etc).
  - b. Things to watch for: burnout, unexplained nagging discomfort, screen time, malnutrition.
- 2. If your athlete is moving on to the next level (e.i. first club ball season, first high school season, first college season, etc)...**
  - a. Find a training facility that works with kids and preferably individualizes to the athlete, not the sport.
  - b. Keep an eye on stress. As much as preteens and teenagers love to shrug everything off, the transition to another team or the next level can be very stressful.
- 3. Strength training and children; do they go together?**
  - a. Yes. We are asking the wrong question. It's not about whether something is "good or bad," it's about how that thing is exposed to your children. You don't make a 7-year-old on her first day of gymnastics perform technically difficult bar routines just like a **good** strength coach isn't going to have your athlete perform heavy power cleans on day 1.