Effective Strategies for ADHD athletes

Shawn Danhouser
Midwest Region TOPSoccer Chair
Does this look familiar?
Overview

• What is ADHD
• Treatments
• Parents
• Strategies
• Conclusion
What is ADHD?

A neurological disorder that presents with a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity that interferes with daily functioning or development. It is characterized by at least six symptoms of inattention or hyperactivity/impulsivity.
Examples of Inattention

• Easily distracted by stimuli unrelated to the task at hand
• Individuals often appear as if they are daydreaming and not listening
• Difficulty in organizing tasks and managing instructions in sequential order.
Examples of Inattention

• Tasks requiring sustained mental effort are experienced as unpleasant and often result in the individual avoiding such activity that demand organization and close concentration.
Examples of Hyperactivity/Impulsivity

• Individuals move excessively
• Difficult to contain as if driven by a motor
• Unable to play or engage in leisure activities quietly
• Talks excessively
• Difficulty waiting his/her turn
• Impulsivity makes it difficult to behave within expected boundaries of family interpersonal, academic and athletic settings
ADHD is...

- Neurological disorder
- Treatable
- Disability
- A challenge to coach
ADHD is not...

• Bratty behavior
• Curable
• Within their control
• Impossible to manage
Causes

• Strong genetic component
• Prenatal environment
  – Low birth weight
  – Environmental toxins
• Likely a combination of both
Prevalence

- Can be found in 5-10% of population
- 3 times more prevalent in boys
- More common in Caucasians and Afro-Americans
Diagnosing ADHD

• Only by clinical psychologist
• Behavior analysis
• Brain Imaging
• Need to rule out
  – Learning disabilities
  – Mood disorders
  – Bi-polar disorders
Other Common Conditions

- Central Auditory Processing Disorder
- Depression
- Addiction - especially with teens
Myths vs. Facts
Myth – It’s willful Behavior

• Behavior is a result of a malfunction in the brain

• The brain does not behave normally
  – Can’t “put on the brakes” for motor activity
  – Can’t filter out unimportant stimuli
  – Impulses and not processed first through a “circuit board”
Myth – It’s a fad diagnosis

• One of the best and longest researched disorders in pediatric medicine
• Studied in detail for over 40 years
• Actually under-diagnosed
Myth – Drugs only sedate them

Drug therapy is with stimulants to “awaken” the slower processing functions of their brain to bring them into normal ranges.
Myth – Drugs are overprescribed

• Many children with ADHD are not getting any treatment at all
• Those that are receiving drug therapy are often at less than effective dosage levels
Myth – They will outgrow it

- 50% continue to have the disorder into adolescence.
- 30-70% of adolescents with ADHD will continue to have the disorder as an adult.
Treatments

• Stimulants
  – 65% receive stimulants
  – Ritalin, Dexedrine, Adderal
  – Brings slower thinking processes “up” to normal ranges
  – “Like wearing glasses for the first time”
Treatments

• Behavior Modification
  – Modeling and praise/reward good behavior
  – Discourage unwanted behavior - consequences

• Sports
  – Individual vs. Team sports
  – Physical benefits
  – Socialization
Why Soccer is great for ADHD

Game environment:
• Fast pace
• Intense
• Chaotic
• Lots of opportunities to work on impulse control

Executive functioning:
• Planning abilities
• Scheduling
• Working memory
• Task coordination
• As these increase, stress levels decrease
Parents
ADHD Parents

- May not tell you that their child has ADHD to avoid them being ‘labeled’
- One or both of them may have ADHD themselves
- Usually willing to work with you if you are sincere
Starting the conversation

- Will be awkward but probably better than you might imagine
- Use the C.U.S. Technique
  - State the Concern
  - Describe why this is Uncomfortable
  - Explain why this is a Safety issue
- Brainstorm and develop a game plan together
How the parents can help

- Establish a preparation ritual and identify a location for equipment storage
- Arrive prepared and on time
- Share successful calming techniques with the coach
- Will decrease chaotic feelings
Other parents

• May feel that the player with ADHD is holding the team back
• Stress the importance of every player on the team and the gifts of that athlete
• Do not disclose their diagnosis with them
Strategies
Start of the season

• Team meeting with parents – ask them to contact you privately with any known issues that you should be aware of
• Don’t assume, assess over a few practices
• Share a questionnaire with them to identify behaviors
Before practice

• Share lessons plans ahead of time
• Structure and repetition is good
• Disorganized practices invite misbehavior
• Look for ways to utilize their energy for each exercise
• Remind yourself that following directions is the hardest thing for an ADHD athlete
• Expect oppositional behavior and plan your responses ahead of time.
Practice/Game day

- Pick a remote location away from distractions
- Repeat directions with eye contact and ask them to confirm the directions to you
- Reduce laps, lines and lectures
- Praise often (behavior modification)
Practice/Game day

• Act – Don’t yack
• Devise a “signal” with them to let you know their frustration level is getting high
• Use cones to define boundaries and progressions
• Utilize them to demonstrate new exercises
Practice/Game Day

• Give them additional duties and individual training outside of the group training

• Utilize assistant coaches and parents
Behavior issues

- Praise in public, critique in private
- Humiliation and punishment will not return positive results
- Discourage critique from teammates
- Let them choose a corrective response
- Allow for bad days
## Other tools – Point systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Tom</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Jack</th>
<th>Mike</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrived on time &amp; prepared to play</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>IIV</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knew score when asked</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>IIV</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knew 2 coaching points delivered at halftime</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneous positive remarks toward teammates</td>
<td>IIV</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showed examples of good sportsmanship to other team</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other tools - Fidgets

- Allows for constructive use of extra energy
- Helps them filter and pay attention
- Can be small and used when not engaged in play
Success Stories

- Michael Phelps – Swimming
- Terry Bradshaw – Football
- Pete Rose – Baseball
- Cammi Granato – Hockey
- Payne Stewart - Golf
Conclusion

• Change your perception if needed
• Be an advocate – promote inclusion
• View the player as a gift to the team
• Simple accommodations can yield amazing results
• Find a role they love to play – they will hyper focus on that task
Additional information

- Play Like a Champion Today: [www.playlikeachampion.org](http://www.playlikeachampion.org)
- Children and Adults with ADHD: [www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org)
- ADDitude The Magazine: [www.additudemag.com](http://www.additudemag.com)
- Council for Exceptional Children: [www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org)
- Well Played: [https://vimeo.com/69503467](https://vimeo.com/69503467)
Questions?
Thank You