

Single Eye Athlete Resolution Proposal for Physicians

Whereas, the Committee on School Health and Sports Medicine of the Monroe County Medical Society and the American Academy of Pediatrics NY Chapter 1, has the task of developing medical standards for assisting area physicians in matters pertaining to school athletics; and

Whereas, loss of one of the paired organ, such as a single or functionally single eye, carries certain inherent risks associated with morbidity and mortality to the patient and liability to the school district and physician in the event of damage to the remaining organ; and

Whereas area physicians remain reluctant to allow athletes with functionally a single eye to participate in certain sports;

Be it therefore resolved that the Committee on School Health and Sports Medicine of the Monroe County Medical Society and the American Academy of Pediatrics NY Chapter 1, recommends the following guidelines to its constituency:

1. There must be a clear understanding and sharing of the responsibility involved in allowing an athlete with functionally one eye to play sports that may damage the eye or eyes. The athlete, parents, school authorities, private physician, and coaches must clearly understand and put down in writing, what the limits of responsibility will be. The athlete and parents must be well informed of the potential long-term consequences of losing the better eye. For minors, this must be a parental responsibility.
2. School age children whose vision in the poorer eye is worse than 20/40 with optical correction are functionally one-eyed. Other children to be considered functionally one-eyed include those children with a history of retinal detachment, previous serious ocular injury, or previous ocular surgery. The child's private ophthalmologist would be able to determine if these or other ocular conditions exist, which would warrant special considerations similar to that of a functionally one-eyed child.
3. Protective eye wear is available that meets the standard specifications of the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM) and should be used when participating in sports with moving balls, sticks or flying projectiles, or physical contact or collision, or racquet sports. In most cases, this consists of polycarbonate lenses in a sturdy frame, in some cases worn beneath an appropriate face protector.
4. The following applies to functionally one-eyed student athletes:
 - A. They should wear an ASTM-approved eye protector for all sports that have a risk for eye injury. The protector should be worn during athletic activities including games, practice sessions, physical education classes and playground activities.
 - B. For sports where players wear a facemask or a helmet with a face protector or shield, they should wear an ASTM-approved eye protector beneath the facemask or helmet (i.e. ice hockey, field hockey, football, and lacrosse). This is to maintain some level of protection if the facemask or helmet is elevated or removed. The facemask or helmet must fit properly and should have a chinstrap for optimal protection.
 - C. For baseball, an ASTM-approved eye protector should be worn when fielding. It also should be worn beneath a batting helmet when batting, beneath a running helmet when base running, and beneath a catcher's mask when playing catcher.
 - D. The only sports in which the one-eyed athlete absolutely should not participate are boxing, martial arts and wrestling. This is because of the absence of effective eye protection for these sports.
5. The most effective protection is only possible when the student athlete understands the risks and is motivated to cooperate in the effort necessary to protect the eyes while still participating in and enjoying the preferred sport. The student must sign a document stating he/she understands the risks and is willing to wear approved protective eyewear for all stated activities. The personal physician should consider not extending the privilege to play for evidence of an unwillingness to comply with the use of protective eyewear.

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6. The parent must sign an affidavit:
 - A. Acknowledging an understanding of the inherent dangers/risks associated with sports including loss of life;
 - B. Assuming a willingness to educate their child of the need to wear protective equipment, and;
 - C. Giving full permission for their child to participate, with the knowledge that in the rare event of injury to the better seeing eye, the child could be disabled permanently, and/or be at risk for loss of life.
7. The school's athletic director shall assure the school physician and administration of the school's ability to monitor student compliance with the use of approved protective eyewear. The school physician should consider rescinding the privilege to play for non-compliance.
8. The school physician makes a recommendation to the school administration regarding student medical eligibility to play. The school administration is willing to support the school physician's medical recommendation and grant administrative clearance to the student athlete. Current laws and regulations pertaining to disabilities and school mandates will be used as a basis for determining student eligibility.
9. The school should enact policy and procedures to implement this resolution.
10. All students should be allowed to wear ASTM-approved protective eyewear for sports or activities with a risk of eye injury.

Monroe County Medical Society/American Academy of Pediatrics NY Chapter 1
Committee on School Health and Sports Medicine
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