# Heat Death in Football Said To Be Preventable

Heat deaths among high school and college football players could be a thing of the past if coaches and players follow recommendations made at a meeting in Chicago recently.

When football practice opens in a few weeks, the first hot days could be dangerous for players unless precautions to avoid heat illness are taken now, a panel of medical and sports authorities agreed.

Heat illness last year caused the deaths of one college football player and four, possibly five, high school players. It contributed to "close calls" and injuries of many more.

The five-man panel, appearing at a meeting sponsored by the American Medical Association's Committee on the Medical Aspects of Sports, agreed that:

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• Prospective football players should get out of air-conditioned surroundings now and start getting accustomed to vigorous exercise in hot weather.

• Coaches should abandon the old practice of withholding water from athletes during practice. Failure to replenish water and salt lost through perspiration increases thet chances for heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

Athletes should be acclimated to hot weather by carefully graduated practice schedules. At least the first five days of practice should be devoted to non-contact workouts.

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• Both coaches and players should be alert for signs of heat illness, such as lethargy, stupor, awkwardness, or unusual fatigue.

University of Kentucky football coach Charles Bradshaw said his squad's practice sessions were improved by regular breaks for water and rest. Overworking players in hot weather only decreases their efficiency, he said.

Said Purdue University's team physician, L. W. Combs, M.D.: "Coaches used to think that if a player lost a lot of weight on the first day or so of

practice, it was a good workout. Actually, all the player lost was body liquid — which is dangerous."

Allan J. Ryan, M.D., team physician at the University of Wisconsin, agreed with Dr. Combs. "Any player who loses more than three per cent of his body weight in a practice session is not getting enough salt and water." he said.

Excessive salt and water loss can result in heat stroke, an extremely dangerous condition, Dr. Ryan pointed out. Anyone can suffer heat stroke if he is active in hot weather and neglects to replace salt and water lost by perspiration. The result is a breakdown in the sweating mechanism and collapse.

If prompt measures aren't taken to get the heat stroke victim cooled immediately, the result can be death—sometimes within 15 minutes.

Approximately 850,000 boys in 14,500 U.S. high schools now play football, said Clifford B. Fagan, executive secretary of the National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations.

"The few deaths that occur in football can probably never be completely eliminated," Fagan said, "but we can eliminate deaths due to heat illness — they are preventable."

Coaches can avoid trouble by keeping a close watch on their players for the first signs of heat illness, said William E. Newell, athletic trainer at Purdue University and executive secretary of the National Athletic Trainers Association.

Parents can help protect their athlete-sons by watching for signs of fatigue and emotional strain, such as loss of appetite and poor sleep habits, Newell said.

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Fred Hein, Ph.D., director of the AMA Depart-Fred Hein, Ph.D., director of the AMA Department of Health Education and secretary of the AMA's Committee on the Medical Aspects of Sports, was panel moderator. Dr. Ryan is a member of the AMA Committee on Exercise and Physical Fitness, and is a past president of the American College of Sports Medicine.





