

# Civil suits concern for sports doctors

By PAUL PALANGO

With the increased use of video-recording equipment and the reality of multi-million dollar civil suits, doctors and trainers must be extremely cautious about what they do when ministering to injured athletes on the playing field, a leading sports doctor says.

Dr. Joseph Maroon told a seminar of neurological surgeons attending a conference in Toronto yesterday that increasingly more high school and college teams are televising or videotaping their games with the result that every action a doctor takes can be replayed before a jury if there is a civil suit.

The legal problems of sports medicine were a recurring theme during the seminar as the neurological surgeons, most from the United States, related case histories and offered advice to one another.

Maroon showed slides of a spinal injury that, if handled properly on the playing field, might not have been so devastating to the player involved. "Unfortunately, they just put him on a stretcher and he was a quadraplegic before he got to the sidelines.

"If there is a case of quadraplegia or death, I can tell you right now, everyone (involved with the team) is going to get sued," Maroon says.

One Dallas area doctor said two civil suits are under way at Southern Methodist University because injured players claim they were not

given proper medical treatment.

Maroon focused on brain and spinal cord injuries, especially concussions to each area, that have become relatively common to football players. There was a consensus among the doctors that some coaches and players are cavalier in their approach to minor head injuries.

Maroon told of one top professional player who has suffered five concussions, one of them serious, in recent years, but continues to play.

At the same time, there are indications that young athletes, pushed by parents or poorly informed coaches, are playing with injuries that could prove crippling in later life.

Some of these, such as "burning hands" and a recurring "stinging" feeling in the hands and arms, are signs of damage to the neurological system.

One U.S. doctor said he "was at a game where three kids came off the field in a minute and a half, complaining of stinging. One kid said, 'It was nothing, it'll go away in a few minutes.' He said he'd had it about 30 times."

Dr. James Sarno, from Marsepequa, N.Y., thinks doctors have to level with young athletes to make them realize that sport is only one aspect of their lives.

"There is a 1 in 54,000 chance of making it to the professional football ranks," Sarno says, "and, then, the average player only lasts 4½ years. They have to look at the rest of their lives."

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Williams freely admitted that he "didn't want to play through a downpour to get two more outs and then call it."

Atlanta manager Joe Torre disagreed, but not vehemently. "Being in this ballpark with the AstroTurf, there were no real problems," Torre said after the game had finally been postponed 2 hours 28 minutes later. "I think it was called because it was before the end of five innings. Two more outs could have done it, but I'm not bitter about it."

Either way, Torre said, his team would not have been awarded a 1-0 decision after five innings. If those extra two outs had been made, "we'd still be sitting here. The game wouldn't have been called off yet."

"I have no animosity toward anybody about the decision. I didn't argue or offer any resistance."

Niekro was initially distressed by the decision but calmed down later. "I think any pitcher would be disappointed in that situation," he said. "We had two more outs to go to make it complete."

When the game was still under way, Williams received two visits from Herzog about Niekro's pitching motion.

"I think he balked seven or eight times," Herzog said afterward. "Rule 805 Paragraph M says that, when he goes to his set position, he has to come to a full stop."

"They should decide whether they want to play under Niekro rules or baseball rules. It's a farce."

As it turned out, however, Herzog's tirade was much ado about nothing. As far as the NL is concerned, nothing happened yesterday.

Milwaukee's Robin Yount s

# Angels with 'Lit

ANAHEIM, Calif. (UPI) — No matter what name you apply to California's style of baseball right now, one thing is for certain — to Milwaukee, it looks like a snowball.

The Angels combined "Little Ball" and "Big Ball" in support of Bruce Kison's continued October heroics to move within one victory of their first American League pennant with a 4-2 victory last night over the Brewers.

Kison, 4-0 in his playoff career, received a squeeze and a sacrifice fly from Bob Boone, a home run by Reggie Jackson and a key single and bunt by Tim Foli to give the Angels a 2-0 lead in the best-of-five series, scheduled to resume Friday at Milwaukee.

"For many years, I was fortunate to play with very competitive ballclubs in Pittsburgh that were involved in pennant races," Kison said in trying to explain his success late in the season. "Winning throughout a pennant race is a team effort. I don't have a good answer or else I would apply it to the rest of the season."

Boone sounded pleased about the status of the series.

"Whenever you start a playoff at home, it's important