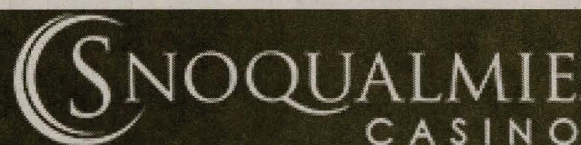


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Seattle Native Addresses Youth And Sports In New Book

By Candice Richardson

The Seattle Medium

For many years, the United States education system has recognized the importance of exercise and sports in building what is perceived to being well-rounded young adults – hence physical education, little league teams and other school sponsored extra-curricular sports programs, and collegiate sports scholarships.

However, in recent years there have been many highly publicized incidents that have also shown the side-effects of what happens when too much focus is placed on sports and competition for young athletes. There have been multiple headline news accounts of physical brawls between parents at little league games, parents threatening coaches, and 10 and under football players being encouraged to risk concussions by performing head shot tackles on opposing players as shown on Esquire TV's breakout hit "Friday Night Tykes."

While much information and conversation have surrounded the controversy of such incidences one man is on a mission to bring back the balance in youth sports.

Seattle native Dr. Ross Flowers, P.H.D. is a former collegiate athlete and NCAA Division I Coach, who also served as a senior sports psychologist for numerous USA World Cup, World Championship and Olympic teams. Flowers was also the Director of the Applied Sport Psychology Program at the University of California, Davis serving 26 intercollegiate athletic programs, over 800 student-athletes and 121 coaches and staff. He now has his own consulting firm, Giles Consulting Group, and is the author of *Introducing Your Child to Sports: An Expert's Answers to Parent's Questions about Raising a Healthy, Balanced, Happy Athlete*.

"Writing this book stemmed from my own experiences," said Flowers. "This is a guide to help parents identify athletic talent in their children and figure out which kid is most suitable for what sport. I also decided to write it after being asked and answering these questions for so many years."

"There really haven't been any books geared towards sports and children," continued Flowers who added that *Introducing Your Child to Sports* is designed to help parents answer an important internal question: "Are we really building and raising happy healthy and balanced children? Or is it about our own passions?"

According to Flowers a large aspect of the book deals with fundamental skills that need to be addressed for both parents and children.

"Unfortunately we're seeing more instances of children specializing in one sport in the hopes of going professional," said Flowers. "Kids 10 years and younger are told 'this is your ticket out of the hood, you're going to be a quarterback.' Kids are being driven to do something they may not enjoy or agree with. By the time



Seattle Native Dr. Ross Flowers hopes that his new book, "*Introducing Your Child to Sports: An Expert's Answers to Parent's Questions about Raising a Healthy, Balanced, Happy Athlete*," will help children and parents focus on the true essence of sports.

they're in high school they're burned out, injured, and they don't want to play anymore...It's time we correct the old adage: practice does not make perfect. Practice makes permanent."

Flowers said he chose to write the book first for parents after drawing upon his own experiences as a young athlete and the support he received from his mother and father (Seattle's first female African American broadcast journalist Micki Flowers and Chairman of AAA Washington Robert J. Flowers who is also a partner in Giles Consulting Group - both notable University of Washington Alumni).

"I realized I had a bit of a unique experience," said Flowers. "I had only one other friend who had two parents at home. Both my mom and dad were involved, working and engaged in my upbringing. That definitely led to me having the experience in putting this book together."

Complete with positive reviews from star athletes such as Track & Field's Jackie Joyner Kersey and a Forward from Al Joyner, *Introducing Your Child to Sports* covers the following topics: Making Good Decisions, Sport Culture: Camaraderie, Coaching, and Commitment; Developing Skills: Time, Talent, & Motivation; Health & Safety: Nourishment, Gear & Injuries; Performance Game Day: Anxiety, Expectations & Support; Role Models and Competition: Positive & Negative Influences,

among others.

"I began running track when I was six years old and participated every year until I retired after my 3rd Olympics at the age of 25," said Monique Henderson, who is a former member of the USA Track & Field team and two-time Olympic Gold Medalist. Henderson met Flowers in 2005 at the world track and field championships in Finland. He later became her doctor in 2007 when she was training for the 2008 Olympics. "The early years are so important and parents play a big role in that. The book addresses so many important factors that parents must consider."

"[Dr. Flowers] is very honest and supportive. Though he's worked with hundreds of athletes, I never felt like I was just a number," added Henderson. "He truly cares about his clients. As a former elite athlete, he understands how important mental preparation is in competition."

Flowers reiterates that part of that mental preparation doesn't just come from coaches or sports psychologists. It starts with the parents and one of the chapters, "Car and Home Talk: What to Discuss and When" is one of the most important in *Introducing Your Child to Sports* when it comes to parents connecting with their child/athlete, as well as balancing out the conversation between each parent.

"How we talk to kids when they're not on the court or on the

field is just as important - what I call Car and Home Talk," said Flowers. "We spend a lot of time as parents talking about what kids can be better at. Unfortunately what happens with kids is that they tune us out. [This chapter is about] how to talk to kids so they understand you and not feel like they're being reprimanded because they didn't do what the parent wanted."

"I never felt pressure from my parents and my dad coached himself in how he could help me become a better athlete in addition to helping coach me in soccer, basketball, and track and field," stated Flowers. "My mom and dad played a substantial role together. My mom coached me [on the way to] soccer, basketball and track & field and did all the registration [for each sport]. I didn't understand all that they did until I started coaching in graduate school and then even more so [when I became] a parent."

"Dr. Flowers combines knowledge and experience," said Henderson. "He is an expert on the topic and *Introducing Your Child to Sports* provides a useful and practical guide."

Introducing Your Child to Sports: An Expert's Answers to Parent's Questions about Raising a Healthy, Balanced, Happy Athlete is available via Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble. More information on Dr. Ross Flowers can be found at www.gilesllc.com.

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