



## **Dangers of Helmet Boxing**

For those parents and coaches who are not aware of the presence and/or danger of helmet boxing in youth hockey, please take note. Often referred to as “locker boxing” amongst adolescent hockey players, helmet boxing involves two players wearing nothing but a helmet and hockey gloves who square off and fight in the locker room, usually before or after practice when there are no authoritative figures present. The rules are simple: only punches to the head, and the fight continues until either a helmet is knocked off, someone submits, or someone passes out. The risks of such astonishing adolescent behavior are great, but the biggest risk is concussion and hand fractures, such as a “boxer’s break” or fracture of the fifth metacarpel. However, do to the confines of the fighting area (congested locker room) and amount of loose equipment and bags on the floor, it is also commonplace for a serious laceration or injury other than concussion to occur.

Participation in this activity usually results from players attempting to be accepted amongst teammates or to prove their strength to peers. As noted by Kevin E. Gordon, MD et al. in the Clinical Journal of Sports Medicine, May 2006 edition, in an editorial entitled Helmet and Gloves, this activity is not limited to boys and serious injuries have occurred in young females participating in such activity. Possibly the most terrifying aspect of this activity is that it is done secretly and injuries are unknown, unreported, and untreated. As described by Fred Mueller, a catastrophic injury expert, “[the biggest] concern would be if they get injured while they're helmet boxing, and don't realize they have a slight concussion, and go out on the field the next day and get another blow.” Children that participate in helmet boxing maintain that the activity is just “horseplay” and are blinded by a false sense of security from their gloves and helmet. The HEP committee encourages all coaches and parents to talk with their kids about helmet boxing in an effort to not only dissuade them from participating, but to also open the door on the topic, so kids may be more likely to discuss any occurrences that may happen. Please do not disregard this warning as something that rarely happens, because it occurs very frequently and has for quite sometime.