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ONE TIME, AT SPORTS CAMP...

Kids can beat the dog days of summer by staying active

By Doug Ottewill

Kids. Whateryagonnado?

Seriously, parents, what are you going to do? Tomorrow, at least for plenty of parents who possess pre-high school offspring, is the last day of school. Whether your kid is in junior high, grade school or somewhere in between, you've got nearly three months to figure out what in the heck they ought to be doing with their newfound free time.

Mow the lawn? Wash cars? A paper route?

Hardly. They're kids. They need to be playing, enjoying their sweet days of youth to the fullest. A job is overrated, something that can and will be done until retirement. Kids need to play, and if I had my druthers, they'll be playing sports all summer long.

That's what I did when I was a kid. From late May until late August, I was preoccupied with soccer tournaments, little league baseball and basketball camp.

Oh, yes, camp. Camps were simply the best. There's something different about a week of solitude – seven days devoted to perfecting your craft. In my case, I spent a week of summer trying to become a better basketball player at the now defunct "Denver Pro Basketball Camp." The Denver Pro camps featured professional athletes as guest coaches, and a host of high school and college coaches who cared enough about kids to devote an entire week (or more) to helping kids improve their skills. Guys like Lakewood's Ron Rossi or Denver West's (now Highlands Ranch) Bob Caton sacrificed a week's worth of time for me. And my parents gladly handed me over. It was a week of learning, exercise and – better yet – cheap babysitting.

Why not send your kids to summer camp? The sport doesn't matter – basketball, football, baseball, golf, tennis, cheerleading; it's the experience that counts. Camps are like college, just shorter and less studying. They're a great way for your kid to grow, to learn a sport and to discover how to play well with others.

Besides, the typical options aren't so bright these days. Think about it; if given the chance, what will your child do during the first week of summer. If they're anything like the typical pre-teen, they'll spend a considerable amount of time in front of the television. Whether they're playing PS2 (and don't tell me you don't know what that means) or watching a myriad of MTV or VH1 programming, they're probably loafing around the house. Their sources of entertainment these days are too good, too tantalizing.

You, parents, need to change this course of action. The reality, however, is that you yourself are busy. Who doesn't work these days? Who has time to stay home all summer long with junior? Not too many of you.

Once in high school, kids can drive. And if they're predisposed to playing sports, a summer schedule is often set, as part of the team's unofficial summer program. If they've gotten to that level, they're probably preoccupied. But if they're not – if they're younger – making them active becomes all that more important. Camps. I'm telling you – camps.

At Mile High Sports Magazine, we don't want to see your kids waste away their summer. We could care less if they solve every PlayStation game known to man; we could care less if they perfect the internet. We want kids active. Childhood obesity numbers are at an all-time high; one out of five kids are now considered obese. One out of five! That's a sad statement.

In order to do our part, we've once again teamed up with **Skyhawks Youth Camps**, a partner we've come to greatly appreciate. Skyhawks provides over 500 camps – all sports for all ages – throughout