

PLAYING THE (scholarship) GAME

Parents spend big bucks and long hours in the car so their kids can play sports at top levels. But there are few free rides to college.

by Elizabeth Razzi

How much is too much?

LITTLE TIGER WOODS first showed interest in golf while he was still sitting in a highchair. But how do you know what's best for the little tigers on your home team?

Follow your child's lead. "If you let a child determine his own activity level, it's never too much," says **Jacob Rozbruch, a New York City orthopedic surgeon** who works with student athletes. And playing a variety of sports through middle school is ideal. "Cross training does have a lot of advantages," says **Rozbruch**. Kids are especially vulnerable to injury during their pre-adolescent growth spurt, which is

roughly between the ages of 9 and 12, and **Rozbruch** has seen overuse injuries in children as young as 9 or 10. Forget about playing through pain. If playing hurts, a child should take a break.

Whether you're sizing up a team or a summer sports camp, coaching is key. Look for coaches who emphasize a well-rounded experience, not simply winning. "Remember, sports are supposed to be fun, and you should always listen to your child," says Robert Malina, director of the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports at Michigan State University.