

# Panel discusses stress on children in athletics

By Ward W. Triplett III

The effects of stress on youths competing in sports and its danger on their self-esteem were the key points of a panel discussion Tuesday afternoon at Mabel Lee Hall.

The featured speakers were Tara Kost Scanlon, an associate professor in the department of kinesiology at UCLA, and Roland Smith, a psychology and kinesiology professor at the University of Washington.

The speakers were part of a two-day symposium sponsored by the Carlos L. Wear Lecture Series program.

Scanlon told the audience of about 150 that children are bound to develop stress if they compete a lot. Indicating studies her department had made on children competing in soccer, stress comes from pre-competition feelings of inadequacy, post-competition feelings of failure and the pressure to win.

"When children first start out in sports, it is not regulated. In a more organized activity, the pressure on them becomes a social evaluation, a source for significance," Scanlon said.

"What we need to do is balance the unbalanced and make children feel that goal setting, development and improvement is more important than winning."

### Reasons and solutions

Smith brought up other reasons and solutions for athletic stress.

By intervening at any one of four stress building factors—the situation, the individual's self appraisal, physiology or behavior—one could change the level of pressure. Smith emphasized the point that a positive approach to the "fear of failure" behavior pattern would be an improvement.

"A child is not told often enough about the good things he does. They are usually ignored, and taken for granted. However failure is means for punishment. This creates anxiety, and in his effort to do as much as those

persons with small anxiety, the more likely he is to fail.

"Even if he does do well, they've got so much negative reinforcement by then, it is never quite good enough," Smith said.

Smith said that in Washington, the football team, as well as children involved in sports, were subjects of several stress management tests.

One was a rehearsal phase, where shortly before competition, the participants would imagine the worst possible situation that could occur, and therefore handle it more calmly if it should happen.

"The idea is to learn to cope with the stress that naturally will come about in sports," he said. "This way one can keep arousal in focus without letting it affect the performance."

He urged that winning not be de-emphasized, only that it be taught that winning isn't the only goal.

Both panelists agreed that the self-concept that sports can give children is one factor that makes youth competition important.

### Important role

"Sports are going to be important in roles of development," Smith said. "If a child is unsure of how valuable they are as people, and he is placed in generalization through sports, it could affect concepts he'll carry all his life."

"A person who can recognize his or her own strengths and weaknesses is the one who will know their capabilities, and not expect too much or too little of themselves."

"It is interesting to look at the course of upsets," he said. "Kansas State could be playing a great ball game against Nebraska, and hold a lead going into the last quarter. But, all it would take would be one collapse on their part and the whole thing would come down," Smith said.

"They would say, 'We have no business being ahead of these guys,' and gradually that low esteem would show. It seems that we're only comfortable achieving in a certain

sphere, and we go out of that, we throw ourselves all out of course. It's amazing how people will sabotage themselves to be back in that comfort zone, and it shouldn't be that way," Smith said.

"Some people have such an inflated view of themselves, they can't see the bad things they do. On the other hand, some people have such a poor view of themselves, they can't see the good. This is why a child should be taught to deal with failure early, so he can appreciate and determine success later on."

"We are never going to be able to escape stress," Scanlon said. "The idea, is to learn how to manage it."

## Information packets aid for off-campus students

Packets with information on saving money and making decisions when moving off campus are being put together by ASUN, according to ASUN Sen. Tim McAllister.

ASUN will appoint a committee tonight to work on the packets, which will include pamphlets on energy conservation, food buying, bike routes, house buying, apartment renting, alternatives to car transportation, and home services such as trash collection and Cablevision installation, McAllister said.

The packets will "give students something tangible that ASUN is doing,"

McAllister said. He said most of the action considered by ASUN this fall has dealt with personal philosophies instead of practical action to help students.

McAllister said ASUN often considers the needs of residence hall and Greeks, but the off-campus student is rarely considered. By offering the packets, he said, ASUN will recognize that the off-campus student is the majority.

He estimated the cost to ASUN for the packets at \$100, \$60 for first-run advertising. He said 100 packets will be compiled at first to test their success.

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