



Konstandinos Goumenidis / Daily News

## WOODSIDE WINS

Above, Menlo-Atherton's Nicola White (22) and Katie Flanagan vie for the ball against Woodside's Caitlin Brandman, who is also shown at the right. Brandman assisted on one of Woodside's goals in the 3-0 victory. Below, Menlo-Atherton's Vanessa Renkel (19) contends with Woodside's Emma Danz.



# Too much playing harms youngsters

BY DR. PHIL WAGNER  
SPECIAL FOR THE DAILY NEWS

With the publicized stories of Tiger Woods' golf introduction in early childhood and the Williams sisters' intense involvement in youth tennis, a popular myth has evolved in American culture: our young athletes must choose a sport early and be involved in this activity almost exclusively throughout the year. Generally, this situation involves high school participation and involvement in one or more clubs in the high school offseason.

Ten years ago, Little League baseball clubs began this "second season" with 350 leagues participating in non-traditional fall and winter play. Last year there were 2,342 leagues.

Participation in offseason basketball programs run by the AAU has tripled nationally over the past decade.

The American Youth Soccer Organization has seen its ranks double in recent years, and "the great majority are playing year-round," a spokesperson said.

In swimming, 40 new year-round clubs joined USA Swimming last year, and kids participating year-round rose by 10 percent while seasonal memberships declined.

The current myth in youth sports assumes this specialized route is the only option for success at the high school level, leading to college scholarships and a glorified professional career. However, this extreme situation not only impedes performance but also puts the youth athlete at greater risk for injury.

Training the same muscles year-round is believed to be the main cause of the rise in overuse injuries in young athletes. The repetitive stress can cause young bodies to break down. When you stress the same body parts over and over again, there's a risk for injury. Nationally renowned orthopedic surgeon James Andrews said that he is seeing four times as many overuse injuries in youth sports than five years ago and more kids are having surgery for chronic sports injuries. According to a study released July 12 at the meeting of the American

Orthopedic Society for Sports Medicine in Orlando, Fla., 30 percent of the athletes who had "Tommy John" elbow reconstruction surgery in 2005 were high school-age pitchers. From 1991 to 1996, it was 12 percent.

While focusing on one sport will help develop the necessary sport-specific skills, athletes will not develop other athletic skills that would transfer to their primary activity. Speed, balance, mental focus, jumping and twisting are all stressed differently in different sports. The body's major growth occurs in times of rest and is impeded by the busy sport schedule of today's youth sports trends.

Young athletes need to vary their training just like pros do. All pros have an off-season when they change their training routine and rest more. They still specialize in one sport, but they adjust their seasonal training to allow complete recovery. No one can go 100 percent in a sport year-round without risking injury or reduced performance.

The sports medicine council for the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a few major principles to improve youth athletes' well-being and optimal athletic development.

- No more than five practices in a single sport per week.

- An annual break from a sport of two to three months.

- One day a week without any organized sports.

Younger athletes should use this time off to engage in physically preparing their bodies to prevent injuries, as well as enhancing their sport's performance. At SPARTA Performance Science, high school athletes train one to two times per week in their offseason, focusing on components like strength and flexibility to target weaknesses and prepare them for their next competitive season.

Dr. Wagner is the Director of SPARTA Performance Science in Menlo Park. For info on this or to learn more about SPARTA, visit [www.SpartaScience.com](http://www.SpartaScience.com)

SPARTA  
POINT

## 49ers hire Scherer to coach QBs

BY DANIEL BROWN  
BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Taking a break from their offensive-coordinator search, the 49ers took a look at a potential quarterbacks coach Tuesday.

Rip Scherer, the assistant head coach and quarterbacks coach of the Cleveland Browns, interviewed at San Francisco 49ers headquarters in Santa Clara.

His candidacy would seem to bode well for Rob Chudzinski, another Browns assistant who interviewed for the offensive-coordinator job Saturday. But the 49ers

had targeted Scherer as a potential quarterbacks coach before speaking with Chudzinski.

Scherer's position with the Browns is in doubt under new coach Eric Mangini, and Chudzinski reportedly will be replaced.

Scherer, 56, spent four seasons with the Browns after 30 seasons as a college coach. His highlights include being the head coach at James Madison University (1991-94) and at Memphis (1995-2000).

Scherer started his coaching career as a graduate assistant under Penn State's Joe Paterno in

1974.

In the NFL, Scherer worked with Derek Anderson, who enjoyed a breakout season in 2007. Anderson threw for 3,787 yards and 29 touchdowns and was named to his first Pro Bowl.

Meanwhile, no quarterback candidates were scheduled to interview Tuesday. Besides Chudzinski, the team also has met with former St. Louis Rams coach Scott Linehan, Indianapolis Colts receiver coach Clyde Christensen and Denver Broncos offensive coordinator Rick Dennison.

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