



"Yeah, coach. It's me, your starting quarterback/pitcher/point guard/goalie. I got hurt really bad at work today and won't be able to play on the team anymore."

Can you imagine getting this call? All of the time recruiting, all of the time coaching, all of the scholarship money you invested for this athlete, squandered because he or she was not fully protected on the work site. I hope none of the coaches reading this ever receives any phone calls like this.

As the spring semester comes to a close at colleges and universities all over the United States, many student athletes are planning how they will spend their summers. Many will stay at school and complete summer classes to get ahead a couple of credits, but most student athletes will be figuring out where they are going to find work during the summer months to pad that bank account, preparing for book purchases and other school-related expenses looming ahead on the horizon for the fall semester to come.

Let's face it, a quarterback who can only see out of one eye due to a projectile injury will not be worth anything to you, regardless of his

cunning, foot speed, and arm strength. You have got to do what you can to keep your athletes safe at their summer job.

Summer jobs for college students will vary depending on what skills the students have, where they live, the industry around their home towns, and whether those businesses will be willing to take on part-time workers.

If you are not worried about what your athletes will be doing during the summer months, then I am glad you found this article. Safety on the job is hopefully going to be something that will be watched very closely by the management at the work sites that the students will be joining.

Unfortunately, there are many workplaces that do not have a solid safety culture that will keep its part-time and temporary students completely safe on the jobs. Chances are these student athletes do not have a lot of experience in workplace safety. So it is highly important, that you, the coach, provide this information to your student athletes, so that they know you will be thinking about them over the next 3 months.

If a member of your team comes back to campus in the fall missing a body part or his or her senses don't quite work as well as they did at the end of the spring, that will mean the loss of a huge investment you and your university have made in that student athlete. Hopefully, some of the guidelines that lie ahead will keep your student athletes protected and out of harm's way in the months to come. Please, take the moment to print out and make a few copies of this article, and or forward this email to all of your student athletes, especially those who will be headed to work this summer.

Hello, my name is Jedd Johnson, and I am a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist from the Diesel Crew. If you have heard of us, then you know we have one of the most excellent websites related to the pursuit of strength on the internet. But that's not why I am writing this article.

I am writing because I know that as a student athlete, it is important to make as much of that almighty dollar during the summer months as possible. I attended Mansfield University of Pennsylvania and played two years of Division II baseball there. I know what its like to be so busy with sports throughout the school year that taking on a part time job for extra scratch is out of the question. I know that during the summer months, making a stack of cash to take back to campus with you in the fall is paramount.

I also know that when working at some summer jobs, the managers or bosses are not going to have your well being as a priority. To a lot of them, they are going to be most interested in the work getting done. They have no investment in your health or strength, like your parents, teammates, and coaches do. So, hopefully, this article will serve as a guideline for you to stay in one piece this summer.

Now, you might be wondering why some Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist from the internet would know anything about workplace safety. Well, I worked in a lot of odd jobs during my summer working stints. I've painted offices and buildings, cut lawns, dug ditches, and moved heavy equipment. I've also worked at one of the companies that is most recognized for their expertise in safety, and I currently work for

a company with an incident rate that is less than half of the industry average each year.

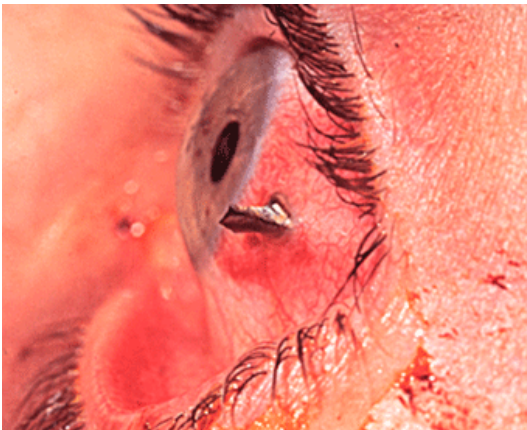
Again, all I care about is making a positive impact on student athletes. While most of the time I write articles and come up with products that help athletes increase their strength, this time I want to help you develop safety know-how.

If I can help just a handful of athletes remain in one piece this summer, then I'll consider this project a success.

Protecting the Eye Sight

Probably one of the most important and fragile of our 5 senses is our sight. Can you image not being able to ever see the display of your computer or X-Box again? Not being able to see fall foliage again? How about never again being able to see that baseball, basketball, football or other implement coming your way?

Job's whose duties inherently put the student athlete at risk for an eye



injury include mechanics, maintenance employees, machinists, groundskeepers, landscapers, and other professions where manual labor is done. In any of the above professions, and many others, safety glasses should be worn. If the company does not issue safety

glasses, yet you find yourself getting hit in the face or eye area with

materials at work, **consider employment elsewhere!** If this is not possible, for whatever reason, safety glasses can be purchased at hardware stores, or on-line at many websites.



Basic Safety Glasses



Over-Glasses Safety Lenses

It's important to remember that once you lose your sight, it is never coming back, so prevention of eye-related injuries is **KEY**. Safety glasses come in many forms, and can be worn alone, or larger sets can be purchased that will fit over your eyeglasses.

Many people who cut grass using weed whackers think that they can just squint, or close their eyes very quickly, when they see grass shrapnel heading toward them. I've got news for you. Those tiny pieces are moving so fast, you are only going to shut your eyes once a piece strikes your cheek or eye lid and your natural defenses **FORCE** you to shut your eye. That kind of reaction is involuntary, part of the body's instinctive ability to protect. You can not rely on voluntarily reaction to close your eyes if a hazard is coming near you when it is traveling over 100 miles per hour, and if you close them every time a chunk of grass came rushing at you – you would have your eyes closed the entire time you were working!

Safety glasses are the minimum protection required when working on a job high in risk for an eye injury. Safety goggles are even better because

they will more completely surround the eye. Finally, if you wear a face shield, make sure the shield is made of plastic. Mesh face shields will still allow pieces to pass through the spaces in the mesh.

Protecting the Hearing

If you can't hear the call in the huddle, how are you going to know the play?

OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, suggests the use of hearing protection of some sort when noise levels reach 85 decibels (dB) over an 8-hour time weighted average. What this means is that if you take readings of noise levels over the course of the 8-hour shift, and average the levels out, when the result is 85 dB or higher, they require the employer to provide hearing protection for the workers. Noise of this magnitude over stretches of time will result in hearing loss.

Some jobs will not reach that 85 dB level over the 8 hours. However, they still may produce noise levels from time to time that are very high.

Extremely loud noises can produce "traumatic hearing loss." When noise levels reach dB or higher, this is when traumatic hearing loss becomes a possibility. Noises at this level include gunshots and jet air planes, but the small-motor machines used in lawn care and other industrial settings can also easily reach these levels.

Hearing is a result of sensory communication between tiny hair-like organs in the inner ear called cilia. These hairs receive the vibration of sounds and transmit messages to the brain, where the receptions are translated and become understood.



However, these cilia can be beaten down when noise is long in duration. When noise around 85 dB travels into the ear, they beat down the cilia. It is like when you drive across the lawn. The grass is pressed down, and stays down for a time, until it straightens back up. Over time, the cilia will straighten back up, but until they do, you may have trouble hearing in a conversation, or when listening to a radio transmission.

Loud noises, like gunshots and small engine tools, can actually break the cilia. This is like a sickle being swung at a patch of weeds. The traumatic noise cuts the tops of the cilia off, and they do not grow back.

Hearing loss can be quick, like this example, or it can be slow – so slow that you may not notice until it's too late.

Try this little test out. Drive home from work. When you get home, leave the radio volume at that setting. When you get into the car the next day, when you start your car if it seems like the radio is blasting, then you may be experiencing damaging levels of noise at your job that are flattening the cilia at work, causing you to need to turn the volume up in the car.

The cilia stand back up after a night of rest and then the volume seems offensive when you get in your car in the morning. If you notice this pattern, you need to assess the noise levels you are experiencing at work.

As a guideline, if you have to raise your voice, or shout in order to maintain a conversation with a co-worker, then the noise levels on the job are loud enough to warrant hearing protection when on-site. The same goes for when you are working out. If the air conditioning units, dropping weights and bars, background chatter, and the music are creating enough noise that it is difficult to have a conversation with your training partner, the noise levels could slowly be damaging your hearing. It sounds crazy, but you should wear hearing protection under these conditions. It may sound weird to wear ear plugs during your workouts, but it is something I have done for years, depending on the nature of the workout, how often weights are being dropped, how loud the music is, etc.

If you are subjected to loud noise that makes it hard for you to have a normal conversation with the next worker who is 3 feet away or less, then the company should be providing you with some type of hearing protection. If they are not, **consider employment elsewhere**. If this is not an option then get your own. You can buy ear plugs for next to nothing at a hardware store.

Hearing protection comes in many forms. Ear plugs, canal caps, and ear muffs are the most common.



Foam earplugs should be first pressed and rolled with your fingertips, and then inserted into the ear, simultaneously pulling up and back on the ear to better open the canal. Press on the ear plug so that it does not work its way out as it expands and fills the canal. Most foam ear plugs are designed



to be used once and then thrown away. Any time they get dirty, they should be thrown away to protect against ear infection.

Other ear plugs are re-usable. They are often made out of flexible plastic. You can use them, then wash them, and then wear them again. Throw them out if they become worn or deformed, or if it seems like they want to slip out or are not providing the protection they once did.



Canal caps are another good option. The nodes are positioned so that they cover the ends of the ear canal and limit the amount of noise that can enter.



Ear muffs are another option you can choose. They are handy because many of the models

you can buy these days will attach right to your hard hat and can be flipped up and down whenever necessary.

Hearing protection only works if it's used and if it's used correctly. If something is not comfortable, chances are you won't use it, so find out what you like, what is comfortable, and what you will religiously use every time you go to work, so you can be assured you don't run the risk of hearing loss.

Protecting the Skin

Probably the thing that bothers me most about jobs and work sites that require outside work are when the workers do not protect themselves from the harmful rays of the sun. I fear that in the next 10 years we will see an explosion in skin cancer, if we do not get smart and protect ourselves better when working on the sun.

All student athletes who work outside should carry a supply of sun block with them. Notice, I said sun block. Not sun screen and not sun tanning lotion. Sun block should be used because it will limit the amount of Ultraviolet (UV) rays that come in contact with the skin. Screens do not protect you completely, and tanning lotion promotes tanning and exposure to the rays, so keep them out of your work bag. Look for a sun block that has an SPF (Sun Protection Factor) of 30 or above. Don't be afraid to re-apply the sun block throughout the day to be sure to not get burnt.

Avoid burning to stay protected against cancer, but also so that you don't feel the sensitivity when you need to train after work. Trying to lay

on a bench to do bench press when your upper back and shoulders are crimson from sunburn is a pain! Prevent that pain by using sun block. Remember, the sun's rays are so strong, they will permeate a light tee shirt, so do not hesitate in applying a base coat of sun block before putting on your long sleeve shirt.

Aside from the sun, there are still other things student athletes should consider when doing summer jobs. If your job requires any kind of outside work like landscaping or lawn mowing, you should wear long pants when doing it. Ticks are popping up all over here in PA. Stay covered up so one doesn't burrow itself into your hide! Many species of ticks carry Lyme disease, although the myth perpetuates that only deer ticks carry it. Keep them off by wearing long sleeves and pants.

Safety around powered equipment

If your job requires you to work near machines and to perform routine maintenance on them, then some sort of energy control system should be in effect. In many companies, the accepted energy control program is called Lockout. Lockout involves shutting down the machine and the power source for the machine and then securing the power source with a lock that can only be removed by the worker who applied it.

If your company does not back the Lockout program completely, **consider employment elsewhere**. All industry in the United States is bound to OSHA's lockout program, and if they do not follow suit, they can be shut down, fined, and in some case the company's top management can be arrested.

Student athletes should realize that skipping a Lockout step can result in a very serious injury – one that could result in the rest of his or her playing career being ruined. Remember, the machines are able to rip, tear, grind and shred pieces of metal and other very dense and resilient materials. These machines don't care if they are grinding up metal or if they are grinding up your hand. Protect yourself fully by following all Lockout rules and regulations.



To see the damage machinery can do when Lockout steps are skipped, please watch the movie *The Machinist*, starring Christian Bale.

Safety with Powered Industrial Trucks

Often called Forklifts or Fork Trucks, Powered Industrial Trucks are very handy machines on the work site that can help accomplish work that would be impossible to perform if these pieces of equipment were not around. Unfortunately, when powered industrial trucks are operated by someone who does not have the knowledge, experience, or expertise to control them, they can become a lethal death vehicle. Student athletes may feel tempted to operate a powered industrial truck without training, but the feeling of temptation will be nothing compared to the feeling of regret you will feel if you injure someone else on the job.

Student athletes should only operate forklifts if they receive the appropriate training, and it is suggested to operate a forklift only when wearing steel toe shoes. Wearing steel toes could keep you protected in the case of a lift truck accidentally running over a toe during operation.

Conclusion

My friends, I have worked in the Safety Industry for nearly 6 years, and have been lucky enough to have seen only a couple of seriously injured employees, but I have read about hundreds of accidents that hurt people and literally changed their quality of life forever in an instant. On the field or on the court, you compete against other human beings and if you work hard enough, you've always got the ability to win. But when you are going against the forces of industrial hazards, you can only hope to come out on top if you make sound decisions and protect yourself the best you can. Studies have been done and proven that over 90% of all work related accidents are preventable because the causes are our own unsafe acts. If you go to work this summer, make smart decisions, follow (or exceed!) the safety regulations at the companies you will work for, and return back to campus in the Fall, unscathed! Thank you for reading this article.

About the Author



JEDD JOHNSON, CSCS

Jedd Johnson played Basketball and Baseball at Towanda High School in Pennsylvania. Later, he played Division 2 baseball for two years at Mansfield University of Pennsylvania, before taking on strength training as his main interest.

Credentials

Jedd has Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist credentials through the National Strength and Conditioning Association, and is a regular speaker/presenter at the Pennsylvania State Strength and Conditioning Clinic.

The Diesel Crew

In 1999, Jedd and Jim 'Smitty' Smith formed the Diesel Crew and began formulating the Diesel Method, a strength and conditioning system involving the incorporation of various training disciplines. The Diesel Crew is now recognized as the leaders in grip strength.



Jedd has authored Grip Articles for Straight to the Bar. Numerous grip and strongman articles for the Diesel Crew.

Strongman Contests

- 2003 - TPS Massachusetts State Strongman Championships
- 2004 - TPS Massachusetts State Strongman Championships
- 2004 - Maryland's Strongest Man
- 2005 - Wise Wellness Strongman Contest
- 2005 - Saxonburg Strongman Contest
- 2005 - TPS Massachusetts State Strongman Championships
- 2005 - Maryland's Strongest Man
- 2006 - Stronger Than All II
- 2006 - Wise Wellness 2006

Grip Contests

- 2003 - Battle for Grip Supremacy
- 2004 - Feats with Hands
- 2004 - Global Grip Challenge '04
- 2005 - TPS Grip Assault
- 2005 - Global Grip Challenge '05
- 2006 - Global Grip Challenge '06
- 2006 - Backyard Bastard Bash II

Jedd has put nearly 350 pounds overhead and lifted 400 pound Atlas Stones. He is an IronMind Certified Captain of Crush. He has lifted the 50-pound Blob, pinched two 45-pound plates, deadlifted the Inch Replica dumbbell with one hand, bent the IronMind Red Nail and the Fat Bastard Barbell Co.'s Grand Bastard Nail, as well as several other renowned Grip feats.



Do you have questions regarding workplace safety?

Contact Jedd at jedd.diesel@gmail.com.