

TEAM COMCAST “AAA” YOUTH HOCKEY CLUB RECEIVES GRANT TO IMPLEMENT CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL OF PHILADELPHIA PROVIDES AWARENESS, EDUCATION AND TESTING FOR PLAYERS AND FAMILIES

Team Comcast, a USA Hockey Tier I Youth Hockey club, through a grant from The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) is developing and conducting a concussion management program for Team Comcast youth hockey players.

This concussion management program includes education for the parents, coaches and players involved with the club, as well as pre-season baseline neurocognitive testing for all players ages 11-years-old and above, all in an effort to optimally manage concussions during the season in a proactive manner. The grant provides Team Comcast the benefit of testing all of its players once for each of the next two seasons, as well as the necessary funding to have CHOP doctors deliver concussion awareness and management education to all of its’ families.

All Team Comcast “AAA” Youth Hockey Club players recently had the opportunity to take the “ImPACT” neurocognitive test which is utilized for the purpose of providing a baseline for an athlete to return to play following a head injury. The test was administered by Sports Medicine doctors at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia Care Network’s Specialty Care Center in Voorhees, NJ, and over 120 players were tested.

In the spring of 2009, the Pennsylvania Department of Health – Bureau of Family Health issued a call for proposals to promote concussion awareness in the youth sports community, especially targeting higher risk sports, with the hopes of both increasing awareness as well as to support interventions to prevent concussions and promote the use of “benchmark” neurocognitive testing for making optimal return to play decisions.

As the coach of three Team Comcast teams during the 2008-09 season, former Philadelphia Flyers captain Keith Primeau was eager to support this concussion prevention and management program. Primeau had his professional playing career prematurely cut short as the result of repeated concussions during his hockey career.

Primeau views this concussion intervention program as an important part of his legacy to youth hockey. Not only does he want to pass on his love and passion for the game, he wants to see it move into the 21st century in terms of safety and concussion prevention and management.

Now, with the 2009-2010 season underway, not only is Primeau hard at work coaching his teams and supporting the work of CHOP Sports Medicine in optimizing concussion management for his players, he continues to push the level of the current understanding of concussions in young athletes by pursuing further avenues of funding and research in collaboration with CHOP in order to evaluate the use of baseline neurocognitive testing in athletes under eleven years of age and to better understand the mechanics, natural history and outcomes of concussions in young athletes. His dream is that these kinds of efforts will make hockey safer and elevate the standard of care for all players young and old so that they can keep playing the sport they love for a lifetime.