

BOOK REVIEW

SAFE AT FIRST: A GUIDE TO HELP SPORTS ADMINISTRATORS REDUCE THEIR LIABILITY

Gil Fried

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xx + 520 pages [\$35.00 U. S. (paper)]

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Sport and the law have been with us for many years. More recent years have brought an escalation of litigation within the domain of sport. Perhaps it can be partially attributed to the fact that people are more aware of their rights and seek remedy through the courts. But it is also likely that there are more participants engaging in activity and, engaging in activities that present a higher risk than ever before. One book cannot begin to cover the range of perils that can occur in managing sport activities. However, Gil Fried, author of *Safe At First: A Guide To Help Sports Administrators Reduce Their Liability*, has provided a comprehensive publication that will serve both inexperienced and experienced sport managers well.

Fried has divided the book into three sections plus appendices. Each, including the appendices, is thorough and easily read independently, according to specific needs of the reader. Sample cases, albeit many that could be replaced with more recent decisions, are interspersed to demonstrate the court interpretations of legal action within sport settings.

The first section addresses Event Development. This section introduces the concept of risk management and the associated legal terms and principles. It presents a convincing argument for the need for a risk management plan with the presentation of facts that summarize a history of litigation in the area, an outline of the types of injuries that occur, the types of awards provided through the courts and the duty of care event managers owe to the participants. The reader will complete this section with an understanding of negligence and thus, strategies for providing a safe environment. A final recommendation and process emerges from this section for the development of an event management committee to attend to the safety issues of the activity. In addition, some areas of administrative liability are presented along with

proposed protections for the organization such as waivers, medical releases, and insurance. This section is an excellent overview to alert administrators to the legal issues surrounding the management of an event while also providing practical suggestions that will reduce the likelihood of injury, negligence, and litigation.

Section two is comprised of sixteen chapters that are sport specific or context specific. It discusses the most popular North American sports including individual (i.e. track and field) and team (i.e. baseball) sports, high risk (i.e. football) and low risk (i.e. golf) sports, and contact (i.e. hockey) and non-contact (i.e. water) sports. Fried also dedicates a chapter to responsibilities surrounding each of the topics of sport officials, first aid care and transportation issues. In the process, it encourages communication with experts to know how to provide an appropriate standard of care when staging an event. While each of these chapters is relatively brief, they draw attention to the themes of facility safety, use of proper equipment, adequate supervision and issues of violence. They also provide a very practical overview of issues that are of relevance to the management of a sport event.

Section three addresses the legal issues around event spectators. On the day that this review was being written, it was reported in the national media that a college baseball coach struck a sixty-two year old spectator for his taunts during the game. This is indicative of the escalating need for safety of participants and spectators at events from acts of violence, in addition to the traditional need of providing a safe facility through inspection and warnings as highlighted by Fried. His brief but concise section on crowd management offers some particularly valuable recommendations for the effective management of spectator interventions. He also briefly addresses the responsibilities that are associated with concessions, alcohol and parking.

The Appendix section of *Safe At First: A Guide To Help Sports Administrators Reduce Their Liability* contains extensive samples of policies, contracts, inspection checklists, and a variety of risk management forms. These examples alone make this book a worthwhile resource to all sport organizations. Appendix A, for example, is an eighty-five page Sexual Abuse Prevention Manual that, it could be argued, could stand on its own as a valuable publication. For the novice administrator, the neophyte organization, or experienced administrators and established organizations looking to enhance the quality of programming for its members while reducing risk, these appendices provide an excellent resource.

Overall, *Safe At First: A Guide To Help Sports Administrators Reduce Their Liability* is an excellent resource. The novice or the student can easily understand the text, while the author also provides necessary steps in a logical

fashion for the sport administrator. *Safe At First: A Guide To Help Sports Administrators Reduce Their Liability* could serve as a supplemental text for academic courses in risk management. I would recommend it for those with an interest or need for a greater understanding of how the law intersects with sport and specifically for those responsible for sport event management.

MARGERY HOLMAN, Ph.D.
University of Windsor, Canada