

from our viewpoint...

## 'Undisclosed injury' not best team policy

It comes up again and again. You read about some player on a college or professional sports team who's out or misses practice because of some "undisclosed injury."

It happened this fall with University of Kansas football players. Though one was widely known to have some bruised ribs, the team would not admit it.

Why? Sometimes the team even tries to claim that it can't reveal the injury because of the player's "privacy rights" under the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, sometimes known as HIPAA.

This is all hogwash. What sports teams are doing, especially college and high school teams, is setting themselves up for corruption by gambling interests. Some will scoff at this, but remember a pro basketball referee lost his job a few years back in a gambling scandal.

Race tracks, professional sports of all kinds, have been touched now and then by gamblers. Gamblers will go to any length to get information that might give them an edge, especially on injuries.

That is why teams have an obligation to their sport and the public to make information known to everyone when a player is injured. That way, there should be no question about who might or might not play, who might or might not be up to full speed.

Coaches sometimes like to hide this information from an opponent, but honesty and openness are the best policy. That gives gamblers little opening to corrupt insiders. And once someone is corrupted, there's no telling what damage they might do.

Players in college and professional sports become public figures, and as such, give up any privacy interest they might have in their health, at least as far as it affects their ability to play.

The league or governing body of each major sport needs to make this pretty clear. To play, an athlete needs to agree to waive any privacy right he may claim. Teams need to make public any pertinent information on who will or won't play, so the playing field is level and gamblers have no reason to pry.

Federal law? The HIPAA statute applies only to entities that bill Medicare or Medicaid electronically. It certainly does not apply to schools or professional sports teams. It was never meant to apply to sports, yet some professional leagues allowed themselves to be out maneuvered by players who supposedly refused to waive rights they never had.

A waiver needs to be required before anyone steps onto the field of play. It's that simple and that important.

Sport — a multi-billion-dollar industry in this country — should not be compromised by foolish whims. — *Steve Haynes*

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## Praying for health of a little boy

A little boy was hurt last Sunday afternoon, far from a hospital or medical care.

Steve and I listened as the ambulance sped to the scene, followed by a doctor and nurse in a private car. Then there was the long wait for the helicopter.

I could imagine the worry, agony and self recriminations of those who loved and cared for him.

I know because I've been there, and those were some of the longest hours of my life.

You don't need to have taken drugs to have flashbacks.

Our son was 6 when we took a picnic to the mountains. While the children played outside and Steve went fishing, I sat in the car reading.

I looked up as one of the girls screamed to see my son lying motionless on the ground beside a the canyon wall. He must have been climbing and fallen. My heart nearly stopped. Was he dead? Was he breathing? Would I be strong enough to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation if I had to?

I was a licensed emergency medical technician and had unsuccessfully performed the life-saving technique three times, but always on adults, always on strangers.

He had fallen and hit his head. He was breathing but unconscious.



**cynthia haynes**

open season

I sent one of the girls up the road to find their father, who luckily was on the way back to the car.

That was in the days before cell phones, and the only way to get help was to go to town and get it. So, Steve took the car and girls into town while I stayed with our son, who had not regained consciousness.

I braced myself for a long wait. We were several miles from town, and the ambulance service is all volunteer. It would take time for Steve to get there, a crew to be summoned and the ambulance manned.

Sooner than I dared hope, however, he was back, and then the ambulance arrived. Our son was stabilized and loaded for the long trip — more than 40 miles — to the hospital.

When we finally got there, we had to wait for the helicopter which would take him to Children's Hospital in Denver. He had a depressed skull fracture and would require immediate surgery.

Steve took off for Denver, an endless five-

hour drive, and I stayed at the hospital in the mistaken belief that I could go with our son.

Not only couldn't I go with him, the aircraft he was to use had to detour to Colorado Springs to pick up a State Patrol officer who had been hit by a car.

That meant more delays, more lost time, more worry. At least now he was in the hands of the doctors and nurses and not lying motionless on the side of the road.

Steve had said he would stop halfway to Denver at some friends' home and call to see how son was doing. I was able to catch him and make him stay there while I got my car and drove to meet him. The doctors at Children's were already looking for us to get permission to operate.

The drive by myself was excruciating. I was a terrible mother. I told myself. How could I let this happen? Oh Lord, why?

Being with Steve helped a lot. He assured me, reassured me, and we held on to each other. But it was a long trip and I always recall arriving in the city and getting stopped at a railroad crossing by the world's longest, slowest coal train.

Our son came out of the incident with some fancy scars on his face and scalp. He was one lucky young man, and I pray that the boy hurt this weekend will be as lucky.

## Don't bail out America's Big Three

Is the impending collapse of America's Big Three automakers the next "crisis" that must be solved by a massive federal bailout?

Most politicians of a certain ideological or geographic bent think so. But Dan Ikenson, the associate director of the Cato Institute's Center for Trade Policy Studies, believes GM, Ford and Chrysler need a shakeout, not a bailout. I talked to Ikenson, Nov. 13, by telephone from his office in Washington, D.C.:

Q: Does the auto industry deserve a bailout?

A: That's an easier question than "Will they get one?" The answer is "no." They definitely do not deserve a bailout. Taxpayers, first of all, should never be on the hook to bail out private companies. They should definitely not be on the hook to bail out companies that have made terrible decisions time and again. And that's what describes the Big Three: They've made bad decisions with respect to the products they make and they've made bad decisions with respect to their labor relations and the capitulations to the unions over the years that have really landed them with an uneconomic cost structure that makes it virtually impossible for them to compete going forward.

Q: What's the worst thing the auto industry has done to put itself in this fix?

A: Well, I don't know how to rank them, in particular. But two things strike me as particularly problematic. On the product side, management demonstrated an egregious failure of leadership by never envisioning the day when SUVs and big trucks would fall out of favor. ... The other big problem they have is they agreed to these ridiculous work rules. At GM, you can't really lay off a worker and therefore reduce costs commensurately. Laying off a worker at GM requires that you still pay 90 to 95 percent of his salary for the period of the contract. You've heard of these job banks where people are paid not to work.

Q: Is there anything GM, Ford or Chrysler can do right now to save themselves?

A: I don't know if there is anything they can do in the short run. If they are going to ask the government to do anything, they should ask it to make sure that the unions don't get violent when the Big Three tell them they are severing their contracts. They need to go back to square



**bill steigerwald**

newsmakers

one with unions and say, "Look, we're either not going to deal with you at all or we're going to deal with you on much more realistic terms."

You can't pay people not to work. The average compensation at GM is \$75 an hour; at Toyota it's \$47 an hour. If that fundamental issue is not addressed, there's no point in thinking much further into the future. There's just no way they are going to be able to compete. That's why I think the \$25 billion bailout is a complete waste of money. It doesn't address the problem.

Q: If it is OK or necessary to give government money to financial companies, why is it not OK to prop up GM or Ford?

A: My easy answer to that is that it wasn't OK to bail out the insurance giant (AIG) and the financial firms and the banks. I was opposed to that, as were my colleagues. ... To engage your question in a more treacherous manner, I think there is a distinction to be made between bailing out the financial system and bailing out a manufacturing industry.

This country could survive without an auto industry at all. If the Big Three and the nameplates were gone, we would find a way to move forward. There would be some adjustment, but we don't need an auto industry in this country to survive. But I think we need access to credit and I think we need banks. So in that regard I think that industry is more important to us than the auto industry.

Q: What about the idea that if GM or Ford went under it would be an economic catastrophe?

A: Yeah. There is something to the argument. I think the Michigan congressional delegation, Gov. (Jennifer) Granholm and Center for Automotive Research are engaging in massive hyperbole here. They have anticipated a response like the one that I have, which is, "Let's let one of them fail and see what happens." Their response to that is, "Well, one of them won't fail. If one fails, the other two go

down — and all the supply network and all the related jobs that go with them and then we're talking several million jobs."

I don't agree that that's going to happen. It's counterintuitive. If one of them goes down, yes, some of the parts suppliers that supply one of them exclusively, GM for example, will be in trouble if GM goes down. But the parts suppliers that supply Ford and Chrysler will suddenly see their orders increase. So I don't buy the linkage that lands us in this situation where we lose 3 million jobs.

Certainly, there will be some job loss. But let's face it; this is an economic recession that we're entering. That's what happens when economies recede. Congress, the president, can not insulate every American from every form of pain.

I'd like to be able to say that nobody is going to lose their job and that their salaries will continue to rise in real terms but that is not going to happen. If the government stays out, this will be sorted out. There will be some pain but the pain will be more short-lived and the solutions will be determined more quickly.

Q: So what do you think the government actually will do?

A: They're going to want to do something, and in my view there will likely be a bailout. But I wouldn't call it a bailout. It's not a bailout. It's simply tossing money down a pit. The beneficiaries of that will be Nancy Pelosi, Harry Reid, the Michigan congressional delegation, Gov. Granholm. They'll be able to say, "Look, we went to bat for you. Now do what you can with it."

But in four or five months when they come back, it will be Barack Obama's chance to lay down his vision of what he wants to do — and hopefully demonstrate that he's not going to capitulate to these left-wing labor politics and say, "No, we're not doing this. You were here four or five months ago. We gave you \$25 billion. You just used it for operating expenses and prospects aren't good. Let's introduce you to the bankruptcy process."

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