# Addressing Today's High School Sport Safety Concerns

Presented by Robb S. Rehberg, PhD, ATC, NREMT, FACFE

# Presentation Overview

- What is Sport Safety?
- The Size of the Problem
- Why is it important now more than ever?
- Strategies for promoting a sport safety culture
- Educational resources for sport safety

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# About the Presenter

- Professor, Department of Kinesiology
  William Paterson University
- Partner
  The Rehberg Konin Group, LLC
- Co-Founder and President
  Sport Safety International
- Clinical Athletic Trainer
  - Center for Concussion Care
    Overlook Hospital, Summit, NJ

Robb Rehberg

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# Additional Experience

- 14 years as a high school athletic trainer with assistant AD responsibilities
- 10 years as an expert witness in sport safety
- 10 years as Chief of Emergency Services at a state university.
- Several state and national leadership positions in the field of athletic training and physical fitness, involved in development of state laws addressing sport safety
- Youth football, baseball, and basketball coach

Robb Rehberg

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# What is "Sport Safety?"

- More useless administrative work
- Another set of rules we have to follow
- Involves putting kids in a 'bubble'
- Takes the fun out of sports
- Was created by alarmist experts to scare parents

# What is "Sport Safety?"

Best practices for all stakeholders in a sport or athletic program that:

- Minimize the risk of injury or illness in athletes (always the primary goal).
- Decrease the legal liability of coaches, administrators, programs, and/or schools.
- Collectively create a "culture of safe participation in sport and physical activity.

# SPORT SAFETY INTERNATIONAL

PROMOTING SAFE PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY THROUGH EDUCATION

- Promoting safe participation in sport and physical activity through education
- Established in 2010 as a result of sport safety legal consulting
- Created ConcussionWise™ as an online resource for clients
- Professional education for athletic trainers, physicians, and nurses

# SPORT SAFETY INTERNATIONAL

PROMOTING SAFE PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY THROUGH EDUCATION

ConcussionWise™
PREVENTION PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE RECOVERY

ConcussionWise™ Instructor
INSTRUCTOR
PREVENTION PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE RECOVERY

CardiacWise™
PREVENTION PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE RECOVERY

ConcussionWise™ Registry
PREVENTION PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE RECOVERY

HeatWise™
PREVENTION PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE RECOVERY

INDIANA
FOOTBALL COACHES
SAFETY COURSE

SPORT SAFETY™ Education Manager
PREVENTION PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE RECOVERY

SPORT SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT
EVIDENCE
BASED PRACTICE
ONLINE EDUCATION
CardiacWise COACH
ConcussionWise COACH
HeatWise COACH
ConcussionWise ATHLETE
ConcussionWise PARENTS
ConcussionWise NURSE
ConcussionWise INSTRUCTOR
ConcussionWise PHYSICIAN

SPORT SAFETY
INTERNATIONAL
PROMOTING SAFE PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY THROUGH EDUCATION
400,000
trained in
53
countries

# Why is Sport Safety more important than ever?

**1.24** Million kids seen in Emergency Departments for Sport Injuries

**1 in 4** Athletes, parents and coaches say they don't do anything to prevent sports injuries

**90%** of athletes say they have been injured while playing a sport

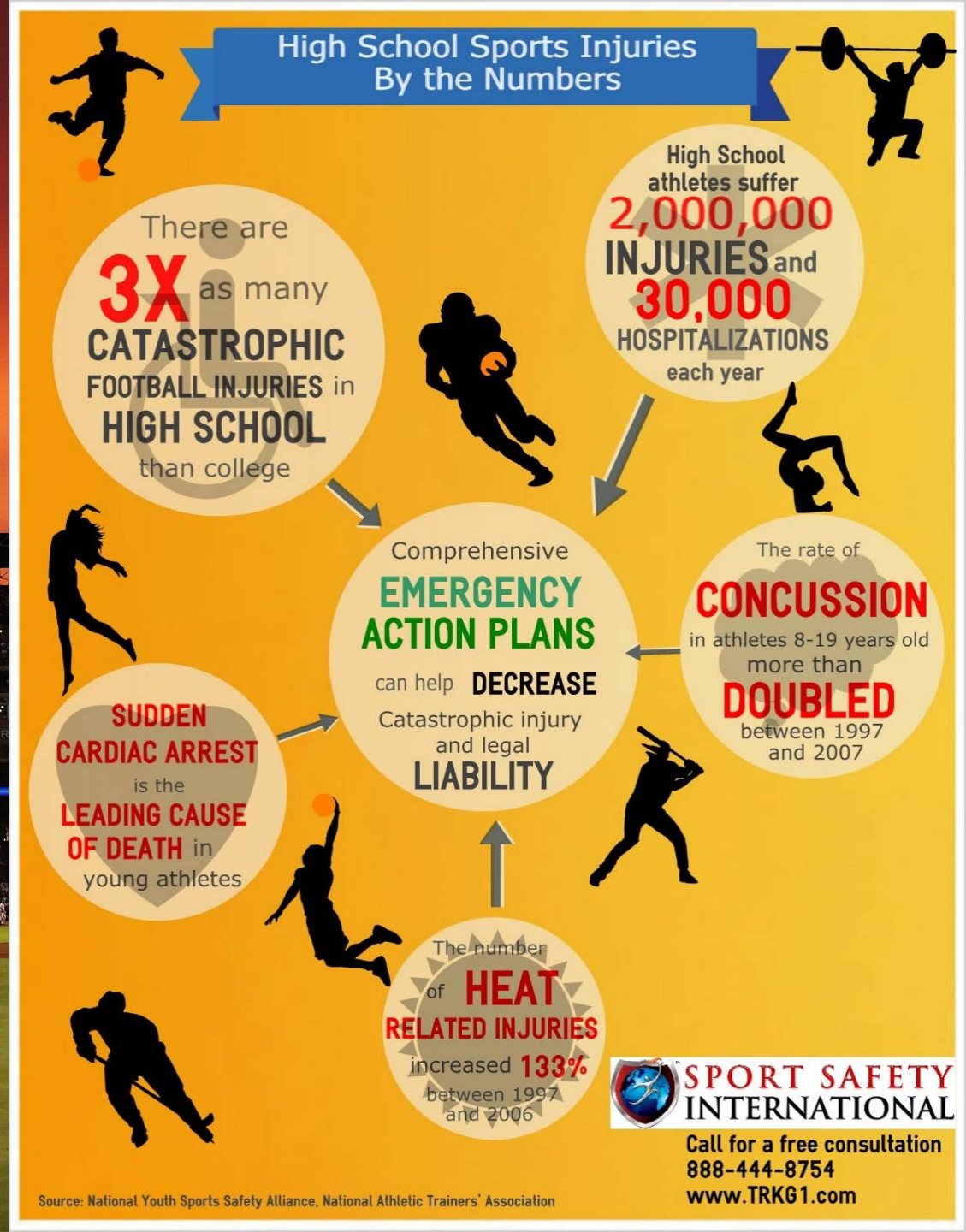
Source: Safe Kids Worldwide (2014)

# Why is Sport Safety more important than ever?

- Growing concern for parents
- Increase in the number of reported injuries
- Decrease in the number of children participating in sports
- State laws and regulations
- Coaches increased responsibilities for coaches and athletic directors

# Why are there so many sports injuries? Is it an epidemic?

- More children and young adults playing sports than ever before
- Increased media attention on sport safety
- Improvement in recognition/ identification of sports injuries



# ...an ever?

## Ex-high school football player suing IHSA over concussions wants saf...

April 12, 2015 – Alex Pierscionek say... anything about the concussion he alle... football for South Elgin High School. ... recalls getting into a four-point stance... in 2012, and after that, waking up in a...

But according to a lawsuit Pierscione... the Illinois High School Association in... staggered by a helmet-to-helmet colli... kept playing. A second blow caused h... field and be airlifted to a nearby medi...

For months after that, he was... headaches, mood changes, sensitivit...

## Football Head Injury Case: Iowa Player Gets Nearly $1 million

May 12, 2015 – A jury has awarded a for... School football player nearly $1 million in... the school's response to his head injuries...

Kacey Strough, now 18, had a pre-existin... condition known as a "cavernous malforn... abnormally formed blood vessels in his b... after he suffered a head injury but was al... practicing and playing, said his attorney,...

The case is the most high-profile lawsuit ... an athlete suing a school in connection w... since the state implemented a concussio... law in 2011.

Strough's case first gained prominence w... in 2013 included allegations that teamma... threw footballs at his head, bullying that a... injury.

## Former High School Athlete wins $4.4 Million Settlement Against Negligent Athletic Trainers

March 16, 2012 – Athletes expect that their athletic trainers will be able to assess their injuries and look out for their best interests. In fact, under Illinois law, when a person takes a job in which they are responsible for providing a service to another person, and they fail to use reasonable care in carrying out that service, and as a result an injury occurs, that is enough to potentially hold the person liable in an Illinois personal injury lawsuit.

As per a recent report by *MSNBC*, that's exactly what happened earlier this month when a public school district agreed to pay a $4.4 million settlement to a former high school athlete who suffered a head injury playing high school football, and now must communicate through a keyboard. The facts in the case alleged that the boy sustained a concussion in an earlier game, but athletic trainers responsible for his care allowed him to participate with

KEARNY MESA
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BIG HITS
BROKEN DREAMS
SUNDAY JANUARY 29 2012
8 PM ET

BREAKING
NEWS
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CONTACT 5 INVESTIGATORS
HEAD GAMES: GAPS IN CONCUSSION SAFETY
11:12 78°

YOUR SIDE INVESTIGATES CONCUSSION SAFETY
40°
10:16
News Channel 5
IN THE FORECAST
BLUES AT HOME
N.L. MVP

Unfortunately, many physicians, coaches, athletes, and athletic trainers trivialize and dismiss the dangerous possibility of a traumatic brain injury and allow a hurt young person to continue to play.

**Areas of potential liability relating to sports injuries**

Although not a complete list, there are numerous recognized areas of potential liability in the area of organized athletic events at the high school level:

- Physicals and screening examinations
- Initial medical clearance to play in an athletic activity
- Adequate facilities and medical equipment
- Adequate training in the use of safety equipment and gear for the athlete
- Planning for athletic injuries and emergency situations
- Diagnosis and treatment of injuries occurring during the athletic activity
- Return-to-play medical decisions
- Informed consent regarding clearance to play
- Recommendations for and follow-up medical care and assessments
- Inappropriate disclosure of confidential medical information, including
- Inadequate certification/training/supervision of coaches, physicians, athletic trainers, and others

# Common Expert Opinions in Sports Injury Cases

- Failure to have, follow, or enforce policies and procedures
- Failure to follow state/league/district/industry guidelines
- Failure to ensure a reasonably safe environment
- Failure to refer an injury to a health care provider
- Failure to properly document/maintain records
- Failure to intervene on a minor's behalf
- Failure to educate, inform, or communicate
- Failure to supervise
- Failure to warn

Fill-in one of the above:

"The _____ caused an unreasonably dangerous condition and was the cause of plaintiff's injury"

# How lawsuits hurt your athletic program

- Most lawsuits settle, with insurance covering the settlement award.
- The result is increased premiums.
- Consequences:
  - Sports can become too expensive to offer
  - Decrease in budget
  - Perception of too much liability

# Essential Components of a Comprehensive Sport Safety Program

- Having a Sport Safety Plan
  - Communication with Parents, Coaches, and School Officials
  - Appropriate staff – Athletic Trainer
  - Ensuring Proper Equipment, and in working order
  - Supervision
  - Education

# Essential Components of a Comprehensive Sport Safety Program

- Have a Written Plan
  - Emergency Action Plans
  - Concussion Management Plans
- Policies and Procedures
  - Written and approved
  - Communicated to all stakeholders
  - Follow them!

# Essential Components of a Comprehensive Sport Safety Program

- Follow applicable sport safety guidelines
  - State Athletic Association
  - League/Conference
- Follow State law and regulation
  - Concussion
  - Sudden Cardiac Arrest
  - Heat Illness

# Essential Components of a Comprehensive Sport Safety Program

- Control identifiable hazards on and off the field
  - Field conditions
  - Access control
  - Field dimensions
  - Hazards in field of play

# Essential Components of a Comprehensive Sport Safety Program

- Ensure proper supervision

# Essential Components of a Comprehensive Sport Safety Program

- Open lines of communication with:
  - Staff
  - Parents
  - Athletes

# Sport Safety – Education is Key

- Staff
  - Coaches, athletic trainers, nursing staff, others?
- Athletes
- Parents

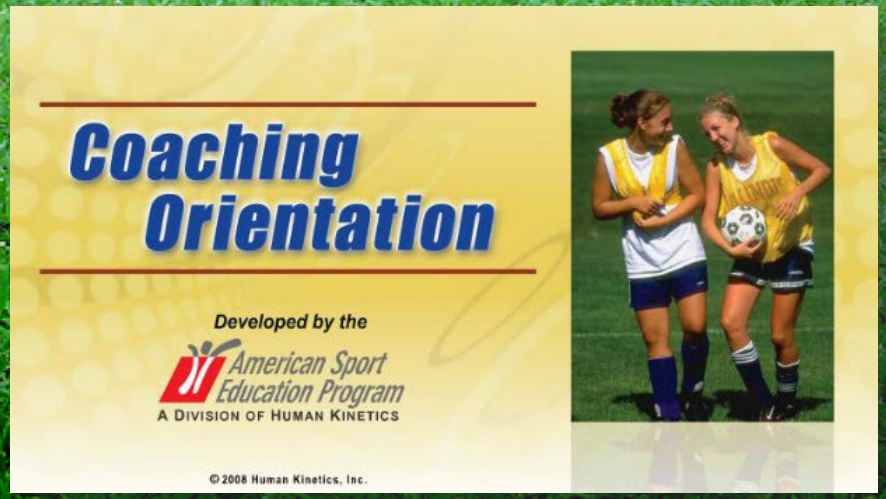
Is it required by law?

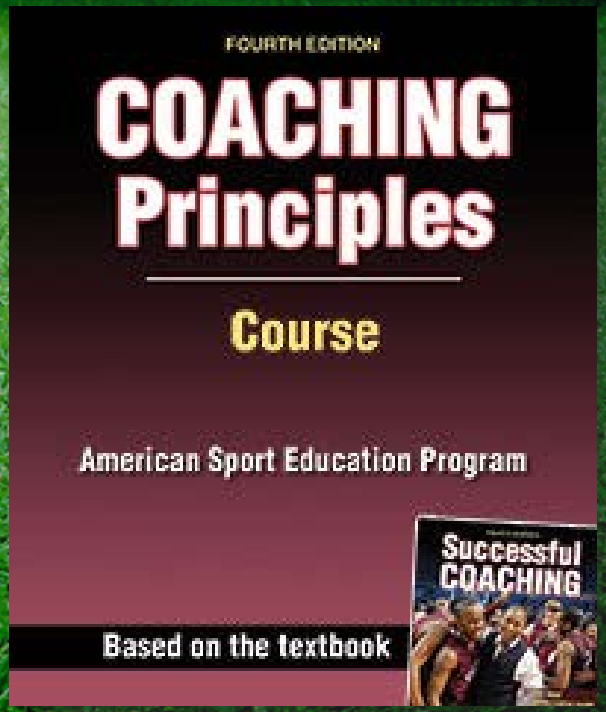
Would it be reasonable to provide education?

# Sport Safety – Education is Key

HUMAN KINETICS
Coach Education Center

- Coaches:
  - Coaching Principles
  - Coaching Education
  - Sport-Specific Education



# Sport Safety – Education is Key

- Coaches:
  - Concussion
  - Cardiac
  - Heat Illness

# Sport Safety – Education is Key

**<50** Percentage of coaches who say they have received certification on how to prevent and recognize sport injuries.*

**80** Percentage of parents that want their children's coach to be certified in injury prevention.*

**0** Number of nationally recognized first aid courses that adequately address prevention and management of catastrophic sports injuries.

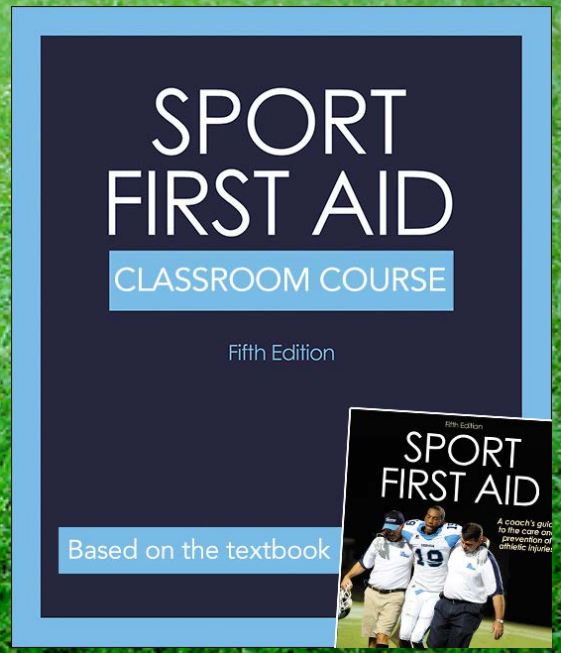
*Source: Safe Kids Worldwide (2014)

# Sport Safety – Education is Key

- CPR and First Aid

American Red Cross

American Heart Association®
CPR & First Aid




National Safety Council

# Sport Safety – Education is Key

**Concussion**

- Concussion
  - 1.6 to 3.8 million concussions each year
  - Over 163,000 emergency department visits for sports concussion annually
  - 5 to 10% of athletes will experience a concussion in any given sport season

# Sport Safety – Education is Key

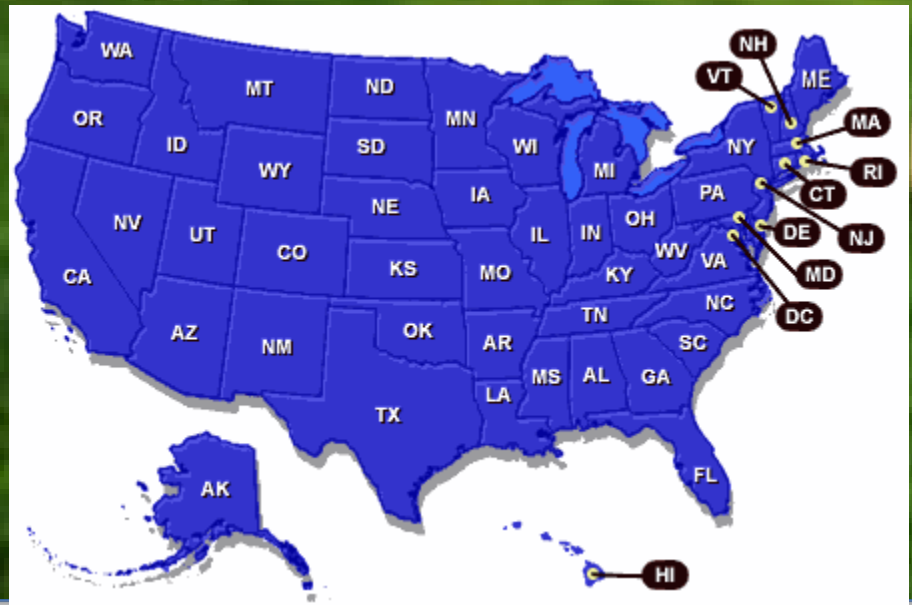
**Concussion**

- Concussion
  - Coaches must be proactive, not just reactive
  - Recognition by coaches can help prevent more serious injury

# Sport Safety – Education is Key

**Concussion**

- Concussion
  - All 50 states have enacted concussion laws
    - Some states have more than one!
  - Coaches should be familiar with their state's concussion laws



# Sport Safety – Education is Key

**Sudden Cardiac Arrest**

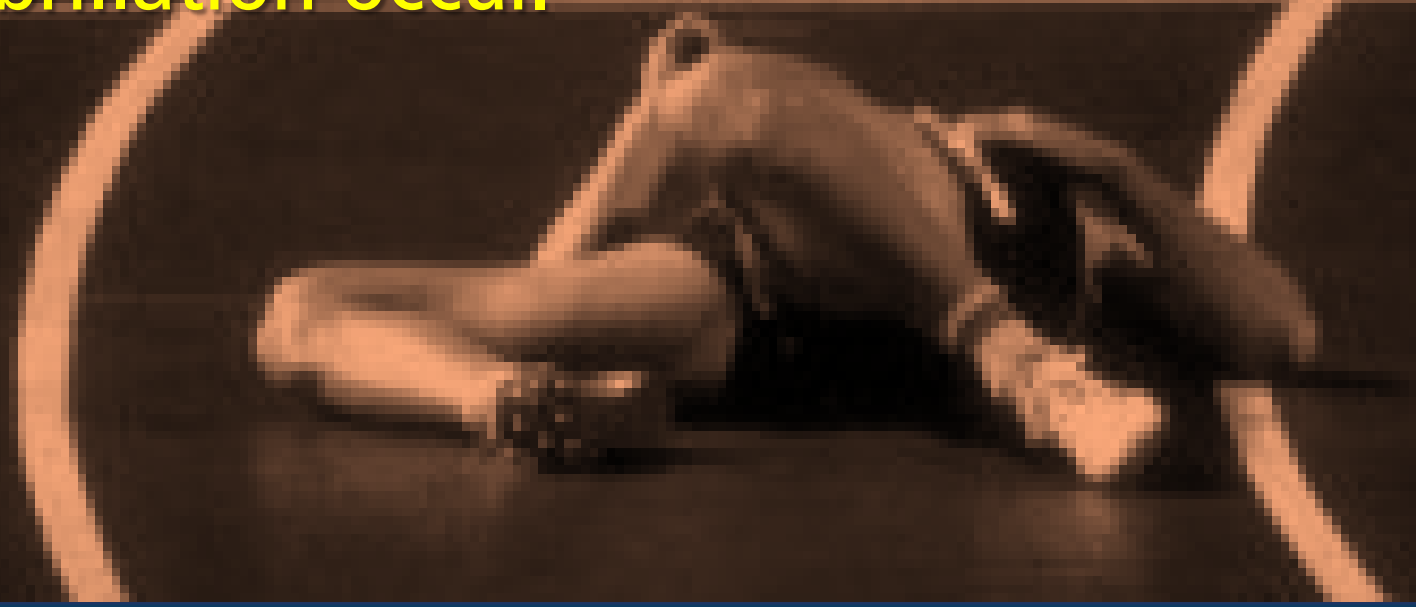
- Sudden Cardiac Arrest
  - The leading cause of death in exercising young athletes
  - As many as 80% of victims have no symptoms prior to arrest
  - Currently, only 1 in 10 student athletes who suffer SCA survives
  - Most often caused by congenital heart defect, such as hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM)
  - Can be caused by a blow to the chest (Commotio Cordis)

* Source: National Athletic Trainers' Association (2014)

# Sport Safety – Education is Key

**Sudden Cardiac Arrest**

- The single greatest factor affecting survival rates is rapid defibrillation
- Survival rates increase significantly when rapid CPR and defibrillation occur.



# Sport Safety – Education is Key

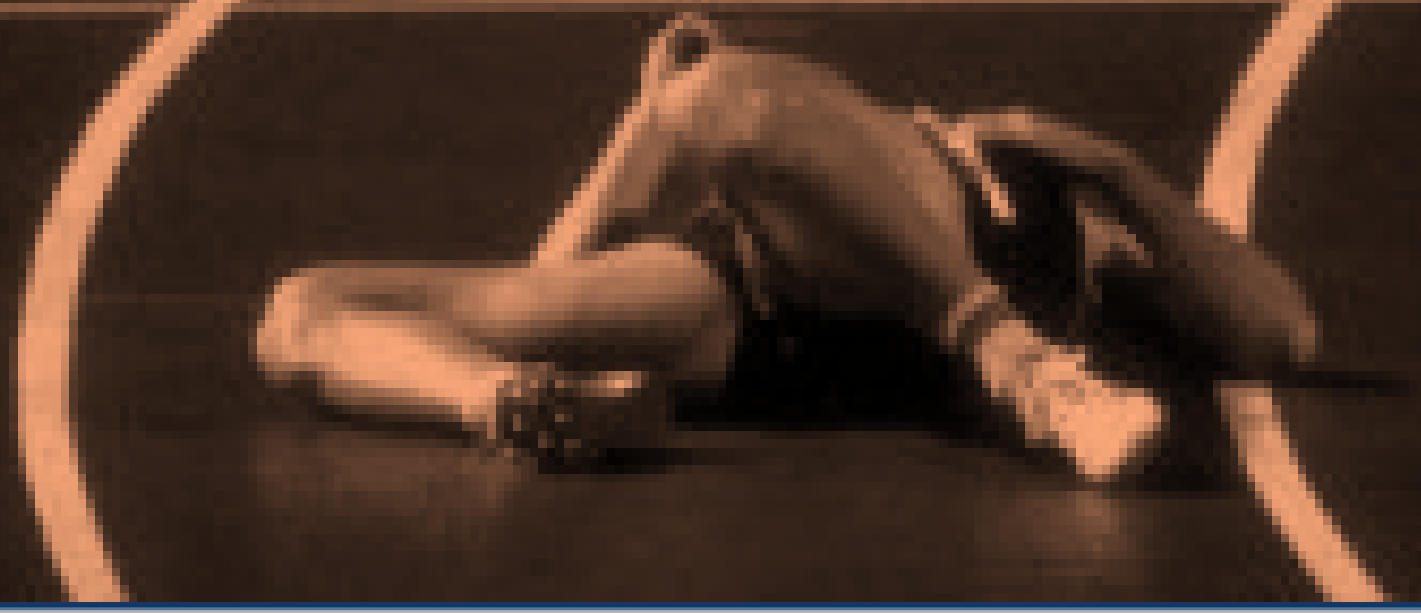
**Sudden Cardiac Arrest**

- Comprehensive state SCA laws:
  - 9 states have passed comprehensive SCA laws
  - 7 states have pending laws
- Many states have enacted AED and CPR laws

# Sport Safety – Education is Key

**Sudden Cardiac Arrest**

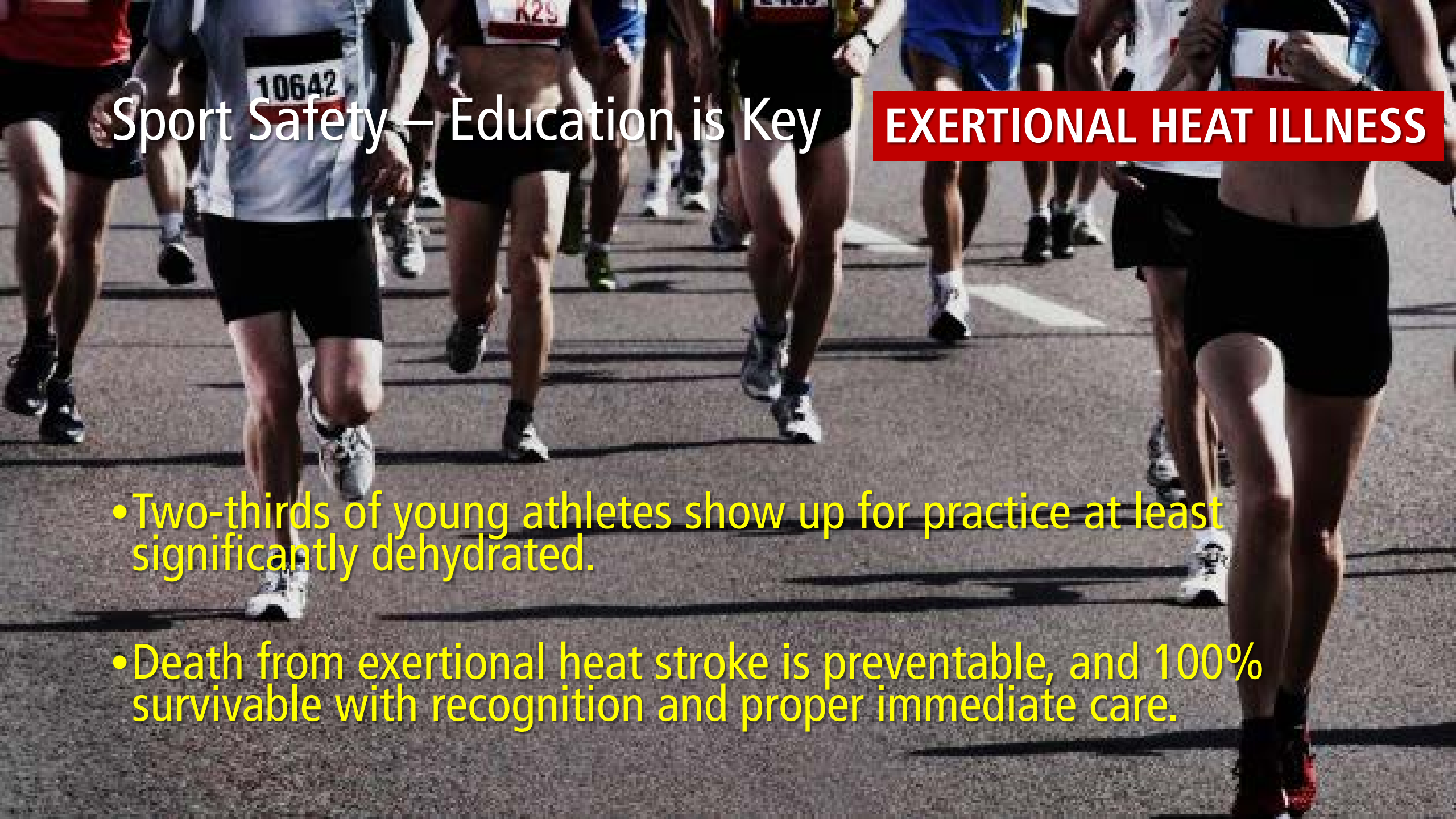
- As many as 20% victims may be symptomatic prior to arrest.
- Knowing the symptoms of congenital heart defects is key.
- Knowing CPR and AED use is essential!



# Sport Safety – Education is Key

## EXERTIONAL HEAT ILLNESS

- Alarming increase in heat related deaths in young athletes
- Among the top 3 causes of death in athletes



# Sport Safety – Education is Key

## EXERTIONAL HEAT ILLNESS

- Two-thirds of young athletes show up for practice at least significantly dehydrated.
- Death from exertional heat stroke is preventable, and 100% survivable with recognition and proper immediate care.

# SPORT SAFETY INTERNATIONAL

PROMOTING SAFE PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY THROUGH EDUCATION

- Online education for Coaches
- 20-25 minute presentations
- Post-test
- Certificate of completion
- Four focus areas:

ConcussionWise™
PREVENTION PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE RECOVERY

CardiacWise™
PREVENTION PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE RECOVERY

HeatWise™
PREVENTION PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE RECOVERY

PREVENTION PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE RECOVERY

# ConcussionWise™

ConcussionWise for Coaches v2.5

## Concussion Symptoms

- Physical
- Cognitive
- Emotional
- Sleep

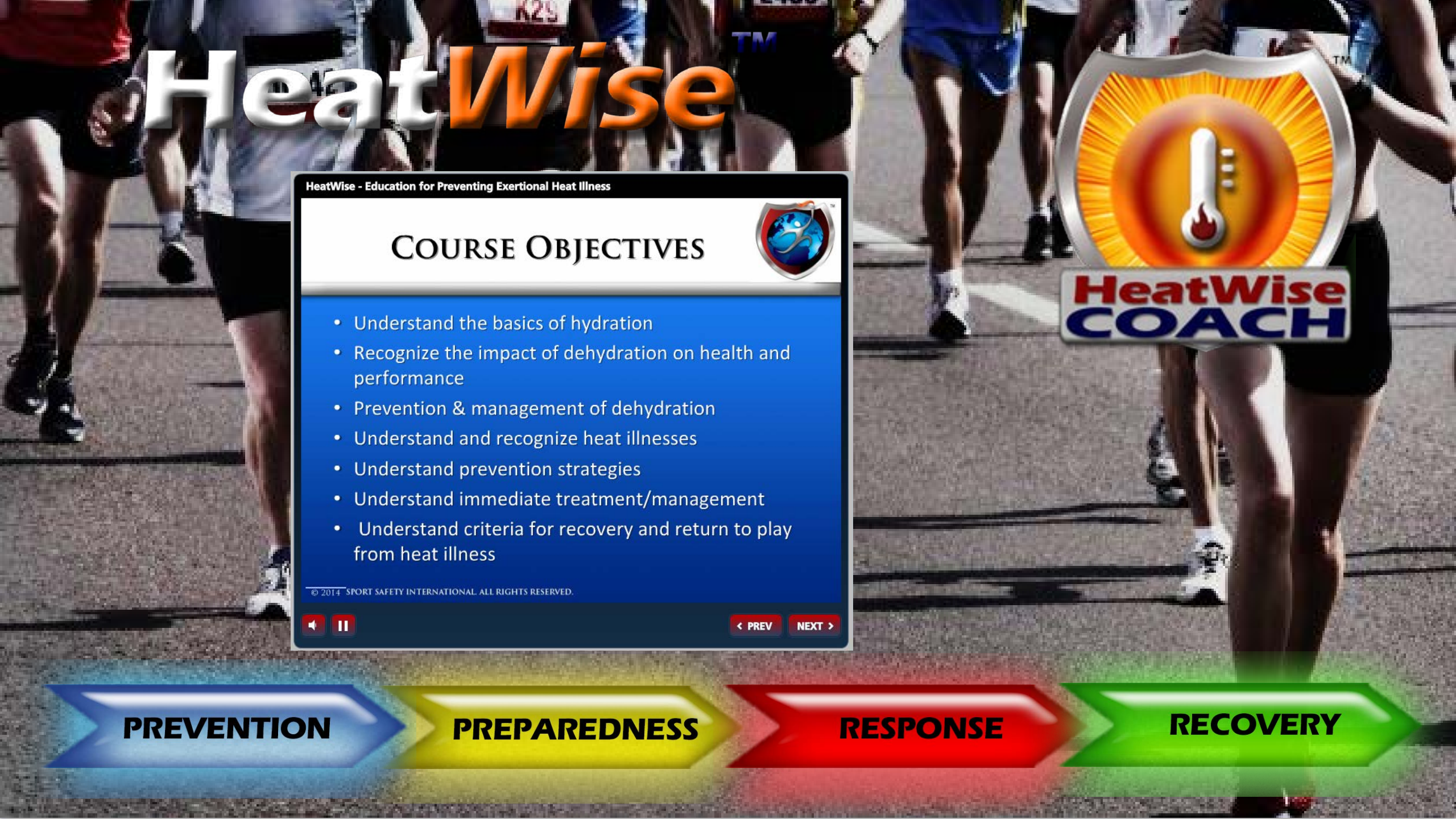
### Concussion Symptoms

Athletes who have sustained a concussion may report one or more of a wide variety of symptoms. There are four categories of concussion symptoms: Physical, Cognitive, Emotional and Sleep. Click on the buttons to the left to learn more about the symptoms in each category.

‹ PREV NEXT ›

ConcussionWise™ COACH

PREVENTION PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE RECOVERY


HeatWise
HeatWise - Education for Preventing Exertional Heat Illness
Course Objectives
Understand the basics of hydration
Recognize the impact of dehydration on health and performance
Prevention & management of dehydration
Understand and recognize heat illnesses
Understand prevention strategies
Understand immediate treatment/management
Understand criteria for recovery and return to play from heat illness
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PREV
NEXT
HeatWise COACH
PREVENTION
PREPAREDNESS
RESPONSE
RECOVERY

# CardiacWise™

CardiacWise COACH

CardiacWise for Coaches

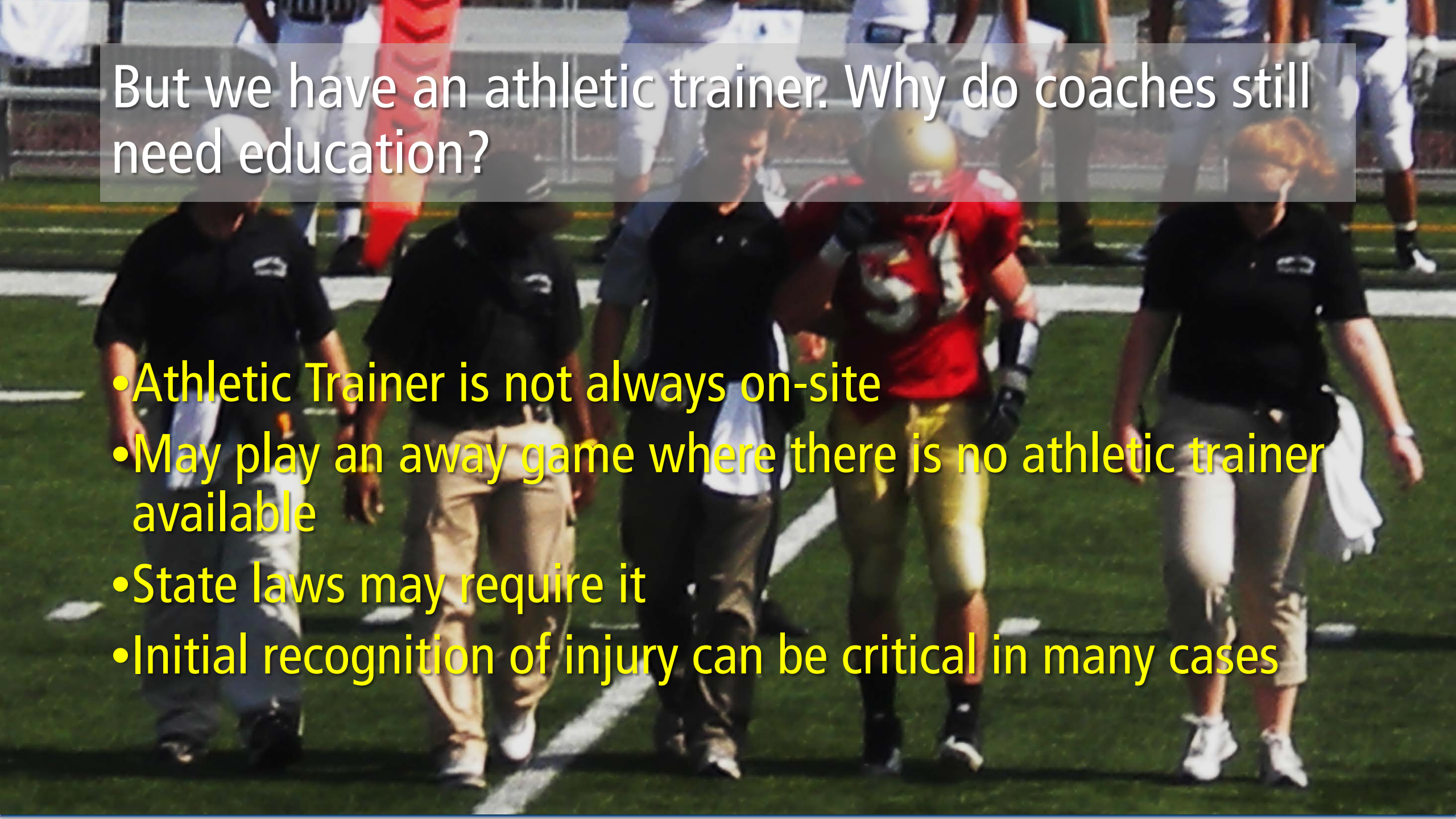
## What is Sudden Cardiac Arrest?

- A condition in which the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops beating.
- Blood flow to the brain and other vital organs stops.

< PREV NEXT >

PREVENTION PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE RECOVERY

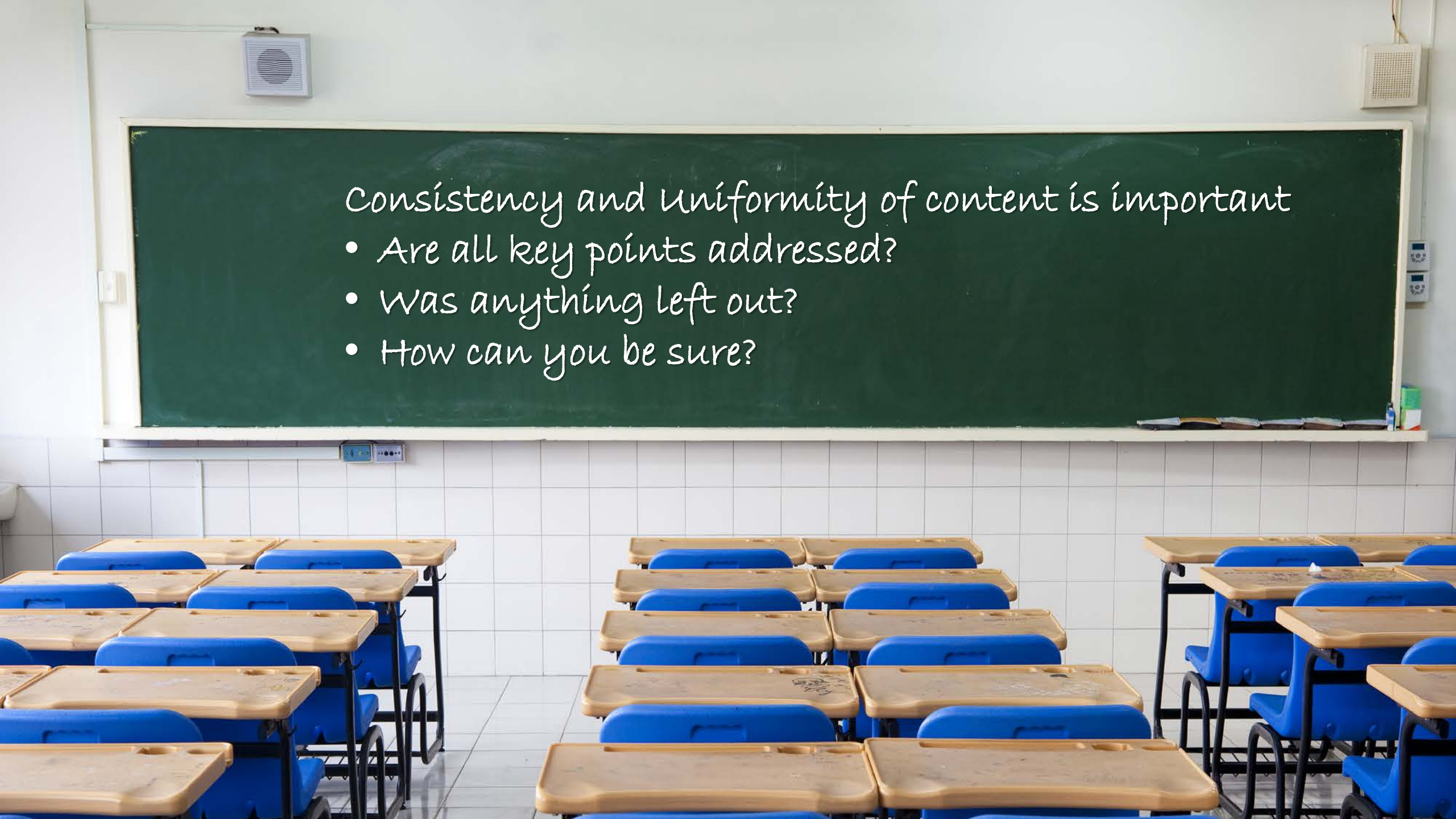
# Why isn't CPR and First Aid good enough?

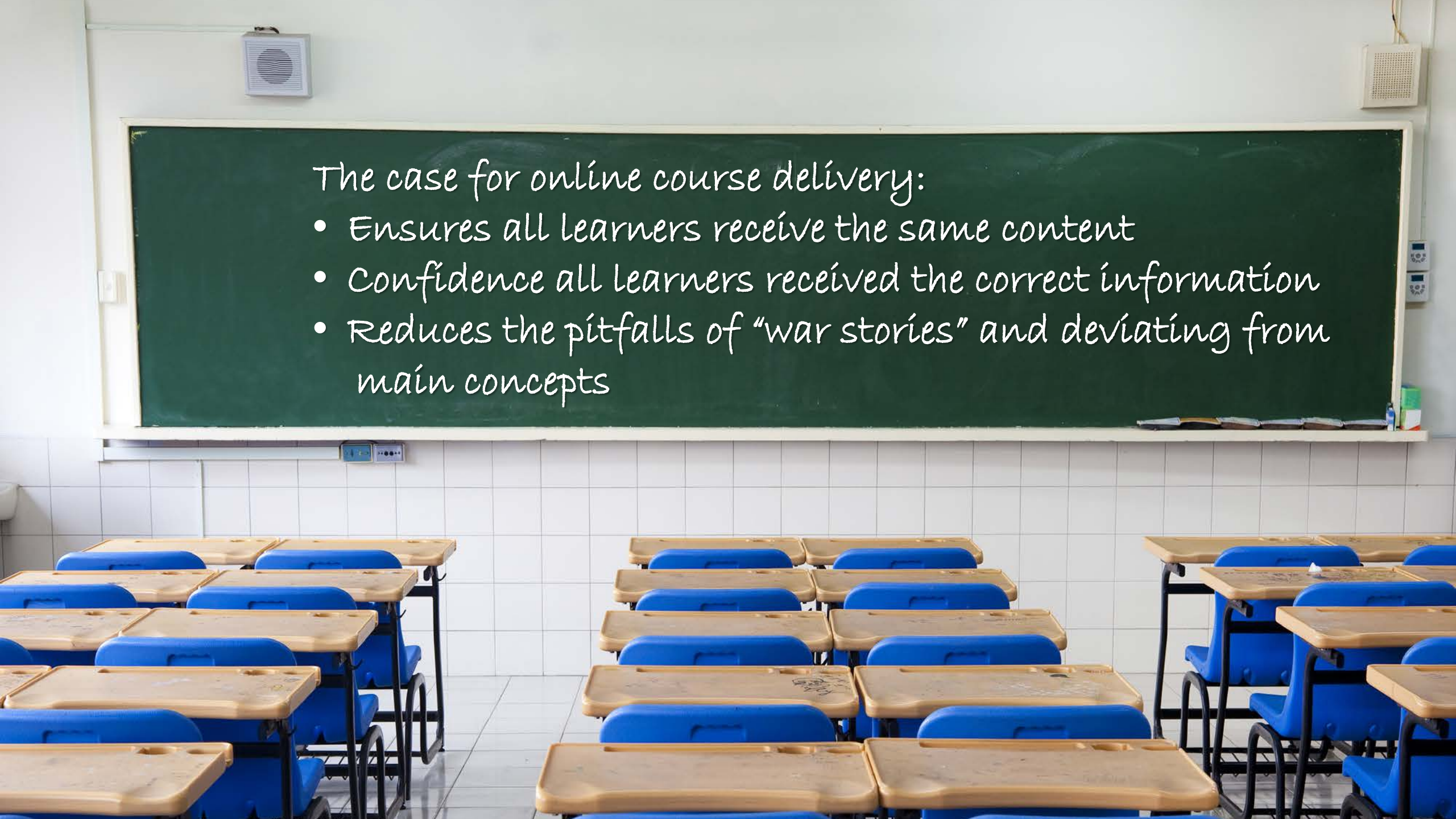


# But we have an athletic trainer. Why do coaches still need education?

- Athletic Trainer is not always on-site
- May play an away game where there is no athletic trainer available
- State laws may require it
- Initial recognition of injury can be critical in many cases

How are you educating YOUR
• Coaches?
• Parents?
• Athletes?


Consistency and Uniformity of content is important
• Are all key points addressed?
• Was anything left out?
• How can you be sure?


The case for online course delivery:
• Ensures all learners receive the same content
• Confidence all learners received the correct information
• Reduces the pitfalls of "war stories" and deviating from main concepts

ATHLETES: PLAY. SAFELY.
ConcussionWise
CardiacWise
HeatWise

PARENTS: YOU KNOW YOUR CHILDREN.
BUT DO YOU KNOW SPORT SAFETY?
ConcussionWise™
CardiacWise™
HeatWise™

# COACHES: LEARN TO PREVENT AND RECOGNIZE INJURY

ConcussionWise™

CardiacWise™

HeatWise™

INDIANA
FOOTBALL COACHES
SAFETY COURSE

ConcussionWise™
Online Education
For Tennessee Coaches

# Thank You!

For more information: www.SportSafetyInternational.org
www.ASEP.com