

IT'S NEVER TOO YOUNG FOR ATHLETIC TRAINING



Wrap your heads around this. McCullough Junior High School in The Woodlands is one of the largest middle schools in the country with an enrollment of over 2,078 students. It houses only the seventh and eighth grade, which is average of over 1,000 kids per grade.

To be classified as a Class 5A high school, which is four grades, the UIL enrollment numbers for the last realignment was 2,065. In short, McCullough Junior High is the size of a Class 5A high school with only two grades.

Staggering numbers to say the least. With that said, the competition inside the middle schools of north Houston is fierce. From cheer to football and basketball, every little edge helps to make the team.

While well-known trainer Derrick Jonkins works with high school athletes who have college and Olympic aspirations, he also focuses on middle schoolers who are trying to make their respective teams.

“Parents think that having a middle or even elementary-aged child receiving athletic training is too early,” he said. “If you think you are too early these days as it relates to youth sports, you are late. Parents ask me all the time if their child is too young to start training. The answer is no, because the level of competition at the middle school level is off the charts. I have kids as young as six-years-old training with me. It’s an investment in their future that will pay off in the long run.”

“The main thing I focus on with the kids are footwork, stretching and coordination exercises at this level,” he said. “I also teach the sport-specific basics that middle school coaches just simply don’t have the time to go over,” he said. “They do a tremendous job, but there are just so many kids in their programs.”

John Cooper School third-grader Jacob Hayley has been working out with Jonkins for the last two years to improve his baseball and tennis skills.

“I’m a lot more coordinated now,” he said. “It was tiring at first but over time you get used to it.”

Austin Colvard of Kleb Junior High in the Klein ISD has noticed marked improvement since starting with Jonkins.

“I play football mostly, but what we do enhances your capability to do be better at multiple sports,” he said. “When I started with Derrick, I couldn’t run a mile without dying. My endurance has improved so much since then.”

McCullough seventh-grader Brandon Stockerl plays corner for the Highlanders and runs the 100 and 200-meters for the track team.

“The agility drills help me a lot and I just feel quicker,” he said. “We do a lot of footwork stuff that helps when I get to school practice.”

