National Athletic Trainers' Association

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For Immediate Release:

NATIONAL ATHLETIC TRAINERS' ASSOCIATION URGES PARENTS AND COACHES ALIKE TO TAKE PROACTIVE STEPS TO PROTECT SCHOOL-AGE ATHLETES AGAINST *COMMOTIO CORDIS* – A BLUNT FORCE INJURY TO THE HEART

Leading Health-Care Organization Offers Suggestions on How to Keep Young Athletes Safe and Prevent Fatal Accidents

DALLAS, May 21, 2004 – Since 1998, over 130 athletes have died from *Commotio Cordis*, reports the U.S. Commotio Cordis Registry. A medical term for a rare disruption of the heart's electrical system, Commotio Cordis is caused by a blow to the chest directly over the heart, which occurs between heart contractions, leading to sudden cardiac arrest. It most often occurs in healthy young athletes, due to the pliability of their chest walls.

To educate the public about the potential risks young athletes face and what steps can be taken to avoid Commotio Cordis, the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) has issued an official statement to its 30,000 members. Based on recommendations from its Age-Specific Task Force, the statement offers proactive suggestions to parents and coaches alike on how to protect young athletes who participate in baseball, softball, football, soccer, hockey and lacrosse.

Keith Gorse, MEd, ATC, chair of the NATA's Age-Specific Task Force, which addresses issues specific to youth and senior athletes, has researched this subject for nearly three years. He and his committee recommend doing the following:

- Encourage all coaches and officials to become trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), automatic external defibrillator (AED) use, and first aid.

- Establish an emergency action plan at all athletic venues. Parents, coaches, and officials should be involved in these plans. (NATA's Position Statement on Emergency Planning in Athletics - www.nata.org/publicinformation/files/emergencyplanning.pdf - is a useful resource.) It's important that a certified athletic trainer or other emergency medical professional is on-site in the event of injury.

- Use all-purpose sports chest protectors during practices and games.

- Ensure all protective equipment fits properly and is used as intended by the manufacturer.

- Teach athletes how to protect themselves against chest injuries. Coaches should work with athletes to ensure proper playing and position techniques.

- Maintain an even and clean playing surface.

To view the official statement, please visit www.nata.org/publicinformation/files/ASTFstmt.pdf

About the NATA:
Certified athletic trainers (ATCs) are unique health care providers who specialize in the prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries and illnesses that occur to athletes and the physically active. The National Athletic Trainers' Association represents and supports 30,000 members of the athletic training profession through education and research. www.nata.org. NATA, 2952 Stemmons Freeway, Ste. 200, Dallas, TX 75247, 214.637.6282; 214.637.2206 (fax).

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