

# Book Review: Safe at First: A Guide to Help Sports Administrators Reduce Their Liability

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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

Gil Fried

[Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press 1999]

519 pages

ISBN: 0-89089-761-1

Gil Fried, the author of this book, is well known in the area of sport law and sport litigation. Fried has amassed a large publication list – in books and articles – as well as teaching and practicing law. *Safe at First* was also edited by Herb Appenzeller, who is also well known and respected in the sport law and risk management fields. Therefore, one goes into reviewing a book with such “heavy hitters” associated with it with a greater expectation of quality and clarity. This book truly lives up to those expectations.

The author emphasizes that this book is actually a guide to assist coaches and administrators in the sports field in reducing their risks of being sued, as well as creating a safer environment to view and participate in sport. While the book consists of four major sections (Event Development, Event Participants, Event Spectators, and the Appendices), the “text” of the book – which gives the reader a primer in sport law – consists of only 141 pages.

Section I of the guide includes all the basics for the understanding of sport law as it relates to risk management, including major concepts and legal cases. The legal cases are very concise and beneficial in understanding the legal concepts being discussed, and won’t intimidate the novice legal reader. The Event Development section begins with the introduction to the reader of the need for a risk management plan, which includes facts and lists of previous areas of litigation and risks associated with sport. The guide goes on in subsequent chapters to discuss basic legal terms and principles useful in developing risk management programs, the responsibilities and need for a risk management committee – or as the author recommends, an “event safety committee.” After the development of a committee, Fried discusses area of liability concerns and then the means in which to exculpate the organization from liability and possible litigation and damages. The author introduces the use of waivers and releases, statutory issues that may influence an organiza-

tion's liability, membership associations which may assist in the development of the standard of care requirements, and the issue of insurance.

After reading the first section of the guide, the reader is ready to tackle the issues of specific sport and event risk management techniques. The Event Participants section of the guide discusses the most popular sports of baseball, basketball, football, golf, gymnastics, hockey soccer and track and field. Other sports events addressed in a broader manner are contact sports such as wrestling and the martial arts, racquet sports, water sports (swimming pools, water parks and water craft), wheel sports (from bicycles to auto racing), and winter sports (from skiing to bobsled-ding). For the most part, these chapters include discussions on facility, equipment and supervision issues, with case synopses to serve as examples. The section also includes chapters, which discuss risk management issues associated with officials, first aid, and the ever important and troublesome area of transportation.

The third section of the guide deals with the area of Event Spectators, which, as anyone who reads the news knows, is becoming an ever important area of risk and possible litigation due to violence and spectator expectations. The first chapter in this section covers the area of spectator management, and discusses the issues of facility inspections, required warnings, sport specific spectator issues and crowd management (which is very concise and very useful). Other very important topics dealt with in this section are concessions, alcohol policies, and parking.

The guide concludes with extensive Appendices, which include policy examples, checklists, manuals on sexual abuse in youth sports, and examples of waivers and releases. These documents and the examples are extremely useful for the practitioner who has not gone through formal risk management training and does not have access to such documentation. The practitioner can either use these documents as examples to create their own policies and checklists, or use them simply to refine and update the ones they currently use.

The risk management guide *Safety at First* by Gil Fried is an excellent reference book for anyone in the area of sport event management. The book is simple and concise, easily understood, and very practical. The issues discussed in the book are documented well through case law and other reference materials, and the Appendices serve as a specific guide for the reader in special areas of policy development and applications. The book can be used by sports professionals in the field, as well as stu-

dents of sport law who wish to have a better understanding of risk management program development.

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