FIG. 13–1   Jillian's essay arguing against competitive sports   **1**

<u>Competitive Sports: Is Your Future At Risk?</u>

Everyone says playing sports molds you; that it helps you become a better person mentally and physically, but does it really? Football, soccer, baseball, basketball and every other sport contains risk; risk of injury, risk of failure, risk of self-hatred. In the end does winning the game matter or is the key point finally feeling self-worth? Playing competitive sports does not have a positive impact on children because the risks and costs of injury outweigh any benefit.

When you and your friends get together and play a pickup football game does safety cross your mind? Do you ever think about life threatening injuries as you kick a soccer ball straight at the goalie, hoping it will land in the net? When you hit the baseball with all the strength in your body do you think of who it might land on? All you can think about is winning. You don't realize the possible harm caused by your actions. GO, FIGHT, WIN! That's the motto of basically every sports team out there. But when the guy you tackled gets a life threatening concussion it isn't so funny anymore. NFL player Troy Aikman got a concussion and now is unable to remember his team winning the Super Bowl. (New York Times, "Listening to wisdom from a ten-year-old son about his head injury") The author of that article also stated "I've become all too familiar with accounts of NFL veterans exhibiting Alzheimer's-like symptoms in their forties." These injuries may not have a damaging affect when they originally occur but the after affects can be horrific. The future of these child athletes is at risk as they begin to injure their bodies without taking precautions. By playing these sports they are hurting themselves, and the effects will last a lifetime.

Not only do they risk hurting themselves but also when they do get injured, someone has to pay the bill! The article "Medical Treatment and Cost" by the Karolinska Institute states that the average cost for one hospital visit for a sports related injury is $335.00. If a young athlete injures them self 4 times in one season, that's already over $1000.00 just on hospital bills alone! It's an insane price to pay normally but that's on top of paying for all of your sports equipment and sport costs as well. How is someone making minimum wage supposed to pay that price? They can't! Yet if they want their child to play on a competitive team they will have to pay these fees. People have to pay electric bills, water bills, heating, air conditioning, rent and so many other fees just to survive. Many people can't afford to pay for extra things like these injuries and fees that competitive sports require. Some may be able to afford it but in our economy not many can.

Between injuries, money issues, and the stress of competing does anyone think of what these competitive sports teach children? With some schools spending up to 6 times as much per athlete as they do to educate each student what

FIG. 13–1 *(Continued)* **2**

are we teaching these children? (nytimes.com, dropping the ball) Are they learning the importance of education or the importance of winning? They should want to learn; they should put homework and studying first. The math midterm should come before the playoff game, not a close second. Competitive sports are teaching children to fight, to beat others to achieve victories. But is that what matters? Do we want them to need to win or do we want them to cherish the teamwork, focus more on trying than on defeating. They should help others instead of pushing each other down to get to the top. Winning just teaches them to gloat, to rub defeat in the loser's face. Life is not about gloating; it's about getting what you need and helping others get what they want.

Although competitive sports are risky and costly, some agree with them because of the ability for these teams to enhance character and teach social skills. Parents choose to enroll their children in these activities so that these kids can learn to work as a team and reach goals with some help. Although those points are reasonable we have to keep in mind that while it may teach a child to work in a group, they will only know how to fight in a pack. They won't know when to stop and help someone else but only how to push others out of the way to reach the top. How is that going to help them? They are just going to lose the lesson they were meant to learn, teamwork, and pick up fighting instincts. Do you want your kid to be the one that gave 12 concussions to members of the opposing team or the kid that wrote a book?

When you grow up do you want to look back and remember your good old days or do you want to not remember half of it because of one too many hits on the head? Competitive sports can become too much and so risky that it's no longer a sport but a fight. Some may say these groups teach character but so does scouting and after school clubs. Not everything has to be a battle to teach us things. Children can learn self-worth and teamwork in many other ways than just battling others on a field. Children should play together and try things like sports but we don't have to take them to such an extreme as the competitive teams do.

In the end it's not about winning, it's about having fun.