

New York Newsday

LATE SPORTS EDITION

HIGH SCHOOLS

Strength Outweighs Size

A year ago, prior to the start of Dalton's football season, **Dr. Jacob Rozbruch** examined the team and found the potential for injury alarming.

"They look big," **Dr. Rozbruch** said of high school players, "but they're not necessarily strong."

Rozbruch figured only 10 percent of the 25 players passed his physical, and among the problems were a torn knee ligament, weak trapezius (shoulder) muscles, a discrepancy in leg length and also a player with scoliosis (improper curvature of the spine).

The fitness tests were not solely designed to uncover problems, however. Their purpose also was to assess the physical strengths and weaknesses of each player, so that the correct training could be prescribed during team work-outs.

"We adjusted our training program during the year to compensate," Dalton coach Roy Samuelson said. "This year, coming back, I noticed a remarkable difference."

That difference was largely the result of weight training, which **Dr. Rozbruch** believes is an absolute necessity in preventing injury.

"The only thing that protects ligaments, besides luck, is muscle," **Dr. Rozbruch** said. "If a muscle can't hold a knee stable when hit, the

ligaments will tear. I told them which muscles were extremely weak."

The most frequent injury he has found among high school athletes are muscle strains, followed by ankle sprains and fractures, finger and wrist sprains and fractures, knee-cap bruises and dislocations, collarbone fractures and separations, shoulder sprains and dislocations, cartilage tears of the knee, and back sprains.

Another recurring problem at the high school level is stretched nerves of the neck and shoulder, commonly referred to as "burners" or stingers. While they may seem minor on the surface, **Dr. Rozbruch** insists they are a serious matter. Again, the correct weight-training regimen is integral to their prevention.

"They don't think about injuries around the neck," **Dr. Rozbruch** said. "They work on their biceps and triceps, looking to get big. I don't see, a lot of work on neck muscles ... I think the work should be on that."

Samuelson is happy with the progress his team has made in the weight room, even though last Saturday's opener yielded mixed results. Dalton lost to Fieldston, 22-16, but finished the game with a clean bill of health.

That being the case, there's always next week.