



## Is this child's play?

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It's going to be a busy summer for Jeff Brown.

Sitting in the dugout at Edo Miller Park, the Brunswick High School junior talks about his upcoming schedule. He sounds like a busy executive trying to set up appointments and budget time, not a 17-year-old who's about to embark on summer break.

"The way I schedule my time is I just get the dates of things and see what I can work out," he said.

The balancing act performed by Jeff – who plays baseball, basketball and golf for the Pirates – isn't unique in this day and age when youth and high school sports have spilled into the summer months.

Students hoping to improve their shot at making the varsity squad next season, or catching the eye of a college scout or just wanting something organized to do will be on the fields and courts throughout the summer – whether it's for a select traveling team, a summer league program or a team's training camp.

But how much is too much? The busy summer for many young athletes is different from that known by many adults, who shut down many organized activities once the final school bell rang in late spring during their younger days.

In one expert's opinion, playing in the summer is not a bad thing, as long as the young athlete also has time to relax and have fun.

"You've got to find the balance," said Tim Delaney, an assistant professor of sociology at the State University of New York at Oswego in Oswego, N.Y., who studies issues

surrounding youth, high school and college sports.

In Delaney's view, playing organized sports in the summer is fine, provided it's something a child wants to do. If athletes are out there against their will, that's when problems can arise.

"Young people playing sports year-round, starting at an earlier age, most definitely could experience burnout," Delaney said. "The feeling is, because they're too young to be so focused on one pursuit, that's when it may become harmful."

For Jeff, wanting to be on the baseball diamond this summer isn't a problem. He admits to loving the game and feels the time spent playing on a summer-league team with players from Brunswick High and Glynn Academy will help his chances of getting a college scholarship.

"You've got to play," he said. "With the way things are today, everybody's playing."

But that doesn't mean Jeff and his teammates in the summer will be on the field constantly. During the summer, Brunswick High School head coach Jimmy Brown – Jeff Brown's father – said his players take part in two five-inning games (two innings shorter than a regular game during high school season) twice a week, and will play three or four games in a weekend tournament.

There won't be daily practices, and once June ends so does baseball. That's when down time begins, and the elder Brown said he feels it's critical to get away for some part of the summer.

"We go hard the entire month of June and try to get 30 games in," he said. "Then, we give them time off until school starts back up."

Jeff admits that baseball, with some work with the school's basketball team woven into the gaps in his schedule, makes for a busy summer. Occasionally, he said, doing something else wanders into his thoughts.

"There are some times when, maybe it's a blowout game, I'll wish I wasn't here," he said. "But, I'm playing a sport that I love. I'd always rather be on a baseball field playing, rather than on a beach just sitting there."