

SUNDAY MONEY



Erin Redwine, center, coaches a girls' soccer team in Redmond, Wash. Ms. Redwine is both a private and team coach. Several of her players are coached privately to help improve their skills.

SPENDING

Looking for an Edge? Private Coaching, by the Hour

By JULIE BICK

WHETHER you are a Little Leaguer yearning for a higher batting average, a teenager angling for a college sports scholarship or an adult hoping to avoid injury while training for an event, chances are that you can find a coach to help.

Private sports coaching is on the rise, said Fred Engh, president of the National Alliance for Youth Sports (www.nays.org) a 25-year-old organization in West Palm Beach, Fla. Ten years ago, it was hard to find such specialized coaches in many sports, but now they are "popping up all over the place," Mr. Engh said, for both children and adults.

Beyond calisthenics and a training schedule, private coaches may now offer video analysis, nutritional advice and biomechanical assessments.

Chelsea and Brockton Boretti, ages 11 and 9, of Wellington, Fla., work out one to three times a week with Sean Benevides, a coach and co-owner of Athlete's Advantage, a 12,000-square-foot workout center in Wellington (athletesadvantageusa.com). There, the children enhance their athletic abilities by throwing medicine balls, running obstacle courses and leaping into sand pits.

Their parents, Robin and Mark Boretti, pay about \$75 an hour for the pair to train with Mr. Benevides. Mrs. Boretti said she had seen a remarkable improvement in the children's fitness and sports team performance over the last year. Chelsea is a softball pitcher and Brockton plays football and

baseball.

"With the competitiveness out there today, you have to start private coaching at this age if you even want to think about playing college sports," said Mrs. Boretti, a golf professional. But this isn't about improving in one sport, she said. Overall fitness, hand-eye coordination, speed and other training aspects can carry over to all the sports the children may want to play throughout their lives.

For now, Chelsea said, the year-round training has helped her hit the softball harder and get to base faster. Brockton said he had learned to run on the balls of his feet. Both peppered the descriptions of their workouts with words like agility, flexibility, coordination and speed.

Depending on a client's needs, private coaching sessions can emphasize the fundamentals of a certain sport, a specific skill or other aspects of athleticism like speed or endurance. Coaches usually charge \$30 to \$100 an hour, based on their region, sport, level of experience or coaching license.

Some coaches focus on adult athletes. In Chicago, Bill Leach (coachleach.com) began coaching adult runners full time after he retired seven years ago from a college track coaching position. Mr. Leach said some of his services "invented themselves," as he saw what his athletes wanted to achieve. These days, Mr. Leach, 63, said he was so busy training others that he did not have enough time for his own workouts.

A series of injuries spurred David Rubin, 35, a marathon runner in Chicago, to seek out Mr. Leach, who helped him recover and stave off additional injury by focusing on his core strength and running posture. Over the course of nearly three years, he also helped Mr. Rubin to shave an hour off his marathon finish time. Now both Mr. Rubin and his wife, Karen Wargo, train with him and have found running partners and friends among his clients.

Coaches often work around their clients' schedules. Student athletes typically train after school, with events and more training sessions on the weekends. Adult clients usually want to train before or after their own work hours or on the weekends. Some coaches' work also ebbs and flows with the seasons of their particular sports.

Private coaching has moved quickly from rare to de rigueur. Erin Redwine, who is both a team and private soccer coach in Seattle (redwinesoccer.com), said 10 of the 16 players on her elite-level club team train privately with other coaches to improve their skills. The girls are 14 and 15 years old. "Having a private coach was unheard of when I was in high school 10 years ago," Ms. Redwine, 27, said. "Now, it's practically expected at the higher levels."

Richard Chin, 37, who runs the squash program at the Harvard Club in New York, has seen an increase in paid individual training in his sport as well. "We never had private coaching when I was on the junior

circuit," he said. "These days, many of the top junior players have private coaching."

"Some people come to me to get an edge in their squash, hoping it will likewise give them an edge in the college application process," he said. "It's too bad there's a motive beyond just playing the game," but on the other hand, the increase in private coaching has raised the level of play and made the sport more popular, he said.

Sometimes, the youngest players who seek coaching may be the weakest players on a team. "They want more playing time during the games or they're worried about losing their spot on the team," Ms. Redwine said. "I try to make the sessions fun and boost their confidence because they can be pretty down when they come to me."

Some families think that private sessions will show a player's dedication and seriousness to the team coach. Others just want more expertise. "Parents want their child to reach their full potential in the sport they love," Mr. Engh said. "Some feel like they need to find a more specialized coach who is more knowledgeable about their particular sport."

Mr. Benevides, the coach in Wellington, Fla., said sports performance was not the only reason for the growth of personal training. "More parents of younger kids want fitness and regular exercise for their kids now," he said. "And they want to instill a healthy lifestyle for the future."

So instead of sending their children out to play tag or pickup basketball at the park, parents who can afford it may send them for speed conditioning on the indoor sprint turf

at Mr. Benevides's facility.

A coach's clientele is often built through word of mouth. Parents or athletes may hear a coach being praised, or ask where a star player trains, and then call for private lessons. If that coach has a full schedule, he or she often makes a referral.

Of course, athletes or parents should check the certification and references of potential coaches. In some cases, a private coach can offer services without any training, licensing or certification. And without a school or other governing body monitoring them, injury or misconduct can go unreported and unpunished.

WHILE official requirements vary, a great coach combines motivational skills, a strong technical knowledge of how to achieve goals and an appreciation of each athlete's needs.

Mrs. Boretti said that her children's training was fun but not easy and that Mr. Benevides would tell the children if he thought they were "doggin' it" and work them harder. Despite the challenge, she said, her children are always eager to go to the fitness center. "They may whine about a sports team practice now and then, but they're always excited for their training sessions."

The mix of tailored physical training and encouragement has an extra benefit for adults, said Mr. Rubin, the marathon runner. "When your life's really busy," he said, "you might tend to skip your workouts, but when you know you're going to see the coach in a few days, it really keeps you on track." □

Specialized instruction may cover nutrition and technique.

ECONOMIC VIEW

LOUIS UCHITELLE

Job Security, Too, May Have a Happy Medium

FOR more than a decade, many American economists have pointed to Europe and Japan as prima facie evidence that layoffs in the United States are a good thing. The economies in those countries were not nearly as robust as this country's. And the reason? Too much job security in Europe and Japan, the economists said.

- American employers, in sharp contrast, have operated with much more "flexibility." Hiring and firing at will, they shift labor from where it is not needed to where it is needed. If Eastman Kodak is struggling to establish itself in digital photography, then Kodak downsizes and labor moves to industries and companies that are thriving — software, for example, or health care, or Wal-Mart Stores or Caterpillar.

This shuffling out of one job and into another shows up in the statistics as nearly full employment. Never mind that the shuffling does not work as efficiently as the description implies or that many of the laid-off workers find themselves earning less in their next jobs, an income roller coaster that is absent in Europe and Japan. A dynamic economy leaves no alternative, or so the reasoning goes among mainstream economists.

"Trying to prevent this creative destruction from happening is a recipe for less economic growth and less productivity," said Barry Eichengreen, an international economist at the University of California, Berkeley.

Starting in the mid-1990s, Europe and Japan did wallow in recession or weak growth while the American economy expanded at a spectacular clip. But no longer. Growth is slowing in the United States just as it speeds up in the 25-nation European Union and in Japan. Unemployment rates in those countries are also beginning to come down, suggesting that the American system is not the only route to full employment.

As the gaps close, does that mean that job security,

in the European and Japanese style, is the right way to go after all? The question would be easier to answer if the European Union countries and Japan had stuck to their orthodox job security. They have not. On their way to revival, they adopted some of America's practices.

"A number of countries have found ways to make their labor markets more flexible, without sacrificing their greater commitment to a government role in equalizing incomes," said Paul Swaim, a senior economist at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris.

So the old dichotomy — insecurity versus security — is gradually giving way to a new debate. "It is obviously the right mix of security and insecurity that has to be achieved," said Richard B. Freeman, a labor economist at Harvard. "You can't protect people their whole working lives. That undercuts incentive. But you can't tell people they have no security at all."

The guideposts in this search for the right mix should not be just economic growth rates and unemployment levels. These are too often affected by business cycles. Many American economists, bent on demonstrating the payoff from layoffs, paid relatively little attention to the cyclical reasons for the underperformance of Japan and Europe.

"Sometimes we forget these cyclical forces," said Sanford M. Jacoby, an economic historian at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Japan and Western Europe flourished in the 1980s. And then the cycle changed. Japan plunged into a prolonged recession, brought on by the bursting of stock market and real estate bubbles, an overcautious central bank and a banking crisis. Europe also fell into the doldrums, partly because of the difficulties of organizing the European Union. Integrating East Germany into West Germany, Europe's strongest economy, did not

Closing the Gap

After trailing for the last decade, the economies of Japan and Europe grew at almost the same rate as that of the United States last year.

	LAST DECADE	LAST 5 YEARS	LAST 3 YEARS	LAST YEAR
United States	3.2%	3.0%	3.2%	3.0%
Euro zone	2.3	1.6	2.0	2.7
Japan	1.2	2.1	2.6	2.7

Sources: Bureau of Economic Research; government of Japan; Eurostat

The New York Times

help, either.

But now Japan is in the fifth year of an ever-stronger recovery, and this year, according to some forecasts, growth in the European Union may even exceed that in the United States, where the economy may be weakening in the sixth year of a recovery.

Cycles count. But so do labor policies. In some European countries, employers are using temporary and part-time workers much more than they did in the past. That gives them leeway to expand and contract their work forces without having to add full-timers who are protected against layoffs. Similar protection exists in Japan, which also relies for "flexibility" on part-timers and temps.

If cost-cutting is necessary in Japan, there is a pecking order, says Yoshi Tsurumi, an economist at Baruch College in Manhattan and a consultant to Japanese

companies. Dividends are cut first, then salaries — starting at the top. Finally, there are layoffs — if attrition is not enough to shrink staff.

"The matter of flexibility is important," Mr. Tsurumi said, "but the Japanese notion is to retrain and transfer people within an organization."

Elsewhere, France and Germany have eased job protection for employees of small businesses. Payroll taxes paid by employers have been cut for some low-income workers, increasing the demand for them.

And the Danish model is getting a lot of attention. Employers in Denmark are relatively free to lay off workers, but the state then steps in with benefits that replace 70 percent of the lost income for four years. Government also finances retraining and education, pressuring the unemployed to participate and then insisting that they accept reasonable job offers or risk cuts in their benefits.

THE Danish government devotes 3 percent of the nation's gross domestic product to retraining, compared with less than 1 percent in the United States. And, of course, everywhere in Europe, the state pays for health insurance and for pensions that often encourage early retirement by replacing big percentages of preretirement income.

"What the Europeans and the Japanese understand is that modern economies can sustain social protections without killing the golden goose," said Jared Bernstein, a senior economist at the Economic Policy Institute in Washington.

That is an understanding that perhaps will take root among American economists and policy makers, deprived as they now are of their long-running contention that job security resulted in weak economic growth in Europe and Japan. □