

Buy Massachusetts Bonds • www.buymassbonds.com

Invest in Massachusetts • Rebuild our Economy • Create Jobs

Individual priority access on May 31, 2013 and June 3, 2013



Dow Jones Reprints: This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit www.djreprints.com

[See a sample reprint in PDF format.](#)

[Order a reprint of this article now](#)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WSJ.com

JASON GAY | May 19, 2013, 7:28 p.m. ET

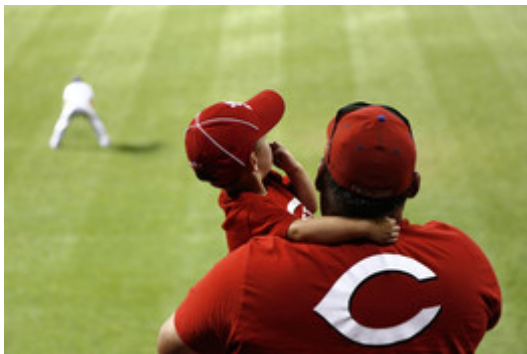
Building a Sports Prodigy (Kidding)

By JASON GAY



We had a hard time. That's no shame. A lot of people have a hard time. We tried everything we could. Every doctor's office, every innovative idea or faddish suggestion, every trick passed down by a friend, or a friend of a friend, or a wise aunt. Advice was given. Candles were lit. Nothing was working. Years passed. It began to eat us up. And then it happened.

My wife got pregnant.



Getty Images

A father and son take in a Cincinnati Reds game at Great American Ball Park last summer.

And now he is here, a baby boy, named Jesse, strong and built like a rugby ball, with a spiky ribbon of blond hair running down the top of his head, and a long smile that just floors us every time.

We think he's the best. Every parent told us we'd feel that way, and it's true. He's just the best.

Because I write a sports column, people ask what sports Jesse is going to play. I do not know how to handle this question. He is barely two months old. I am not sure what to say. *Uhhh...he's going to win the U.S Open. He will medal in the long jump. He will ice two free*

throws in NBA Finals and make a commercial for foot deodorant. He will manage the Cubs to a World Series. He will get cut by the Jaguars.

I have no idea. He's a baby. If he stops waking up at 4:30 a.m., I will buy him a Super Bowl ring.

I don't care if he plays anything. I want him to do what he wants. Of course: He may be falling behind. It may already be too late to produce a sports prodigy. We may have to cross the Brazil World Cup off the list. The Rio Olympics, too. He needs 10,000 hours. Isn't that the formula? Five

figures of solid sports commitment—and boom—he's being overpaid by the Yankees.

Let's get an hour of practice done right now in the crib. Boom. Only 9,999 more to go.

Should I get him a coach? Does he need off-season training camps? A swing guru? A nutritionist? A nutritionist for his swing guru? Do I have any idea what I am getting myself into? My friends with older kids, it seems they are always either A) driving the car to a game, B) driving home from a game, or C) standing on a sideline at a game. They are soccer dads and hockey moms or in long, complicated relationships with lacrosse. They talk about travel teams like they're the chicken pox.

I love this and I am scared by this. I adored playing youth sports. But later on I was an umpire and referee for youth sports. I had parents run me down after games and yell at me. I learned curse words I didn't even know were curse words.

If you ever see me yell at a Little League umpire, just wrap me with duct tape and leave me in the dugout.

I want to approach it the right way. Is the right way even possible? Have fun, don't take it too seriously, forget who won five seconds after it's over. I want him to space out in the third quarter or forget to hit the cutoff man and have it be no big deal. I want the games to be funny. Like they are with the Mets.

Or maybe I need to push. He's not playing winter baseball or summer basketball. His spiral isn't perfect. Nick Saban has yet to make an offer. Coach K isn't interested. Should I be worried? His bench press is iffy. His vertical leap is unknown. I've timed him in the 40. He just lies there, sleeping, dreaming about milk.

I'd say third-round pick at best. Maybe second if the Jets get desperate.

It's my fault. I don't give him much of a head start. I wasn't much of an athlete as a kid. I spent a zillion years in youth soccer and never once scored a goal. I raced cross-country and specialized in last place. I cannot teach him how to hit a curve. I *can* teach him how to catch a pop fly with his face.

But if he wants to play, he should try everything. Don't specialize. Experiment. Try baseball. Try badminton, volleyball, wrestling, lacrosse, squash, hockey, swimming, skateboarding, cricket, crew, anything. Try tennis, because it's the game my Dad taught me, and still teaches, 40 seasons in, at the high school not far from where I grew up. I bet his grandpa makes him try playing with a wooden racket just once. To give him respect for how they used to do it.

Try basketball, just to learn how to spell H-O-R-S-E.

Try golf, just to be humbled.

Try running, because it's so beautifully simple. You can run anywhere you go on the planet.

Try cycling, because when you really get pedaling, it feels like you're flying.

Try yoga...well, he's already tried yoga. Baby yoga classes, with his mom. This is what happens when you live in Brooklyn.

But I don't mind if he doesn't try any of these things. I want what any parent wants. I want him to be happy. I want him to find his own way.

We're still in a little shock that he's actually here. There is no rush. Unless...oh, man. The Jets are calling.

Write to Jason Gay at jason.gay@wsj.com

A version of this article appeared May 20, 2013, on page B8 in the U.S. edition of The Wall Street Journal, with the headline: Building a Sports Prodigy (Kidding).

Copyright 2012 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our [Subscriber Agreement](#) and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit www.djreprints.com