

StarTribune.com | MINNEAPOLIS - ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

Last update: April 24, 2007 – 10:14 AM

The Edge: For athletes looking for some extra

Sports training center helps young athletes get ahead in competitiveness and safety.

By [Brian Stensaas](#), Star Tribune

Though it's headquartered in a structure resembling an office building and the lobby is like any other -- complete with a couch -- behind the scenes, the Edge sports training center in Minnetonka is far from ordinary.

On any given day, athletes as young as grade-school-age are lifting weights, skating on an incline ramp, spiking a volleyball or working out with a trainer in a variety of other ways.

It's the idea of a small group of parents that has finally come to fruition: To get kids the training they won't get with their sports teams or even big-name sports clubs.

"The way youth sports are these days, there's obviously a market for it," said Brian Wiersma, director of business development for the company. "The kids need it, some parents say, to keep up with how intense sports are."

Steve Fedie, who is both the athletics director and head softball coach at Orono, said a place like the Edge can be a positive thing for the right athlete.

"[At high schools] you have one coach trying to take care of 20-25 athletes at once," Fedie said. [The Edge] can give more personalized attention with a more rigorous individualized program.

"For the people who want a little extra, I think it's a very good thing. Is it for everybody? I don't know."

The Edge started four years ago as a small training facility. Since, it has grown into three full-time centers with large, specialized partners such as M1 Volleyball and Total Hockey.

In addition to Minnetonka, there are locations in Eden Prairie and Eagan.

While the Edge's goal is to enhance athletic performance for its 400-plus clients, what it preaches most is prevention of injuries. Trainers teach basic skills, such as how to change direction on a soccer field.

Athletes of all sports use the Edge, including ultimate Frisbee players and figure skaters.

A newsletter available at the Minnetonka location doesn't boast that athletes can

score more goals or become their teams' stars. Instead, it suggests that they can gain the upper hand by training their bodies to properly respond to physical stress.

"The cheesy term we use is 'pre-hab,' " Wiersma said. "Get your body in shape so it can endure the rigors of your sport."

A regular part of the week

That's not to say clients don't improve their respective games in the process.

Cameron Cain, a junior on this year's Holy Family state-championship boys' basketball team, began going to the Edge in September.

At the time, he said, he could barely reach the basketball rim when he jumped. And now?

"I'm grabbing it," he said. "I've really improved my vertical jump. It's really helped me get up and compete with the taller guys for those rebounds."

Cain, a 6-foot-2 guard, snagged 10 rebounds in the state tournament.

Clients -- most of them high-school-aged but no one is turned away -- purchase session packages that cost about \$270 for 14 sessions. They work with one of seven trainers on staff during their sessions, and they can come in early or stay late to shoot baskets or throw a football.

A free consultation is offered for new clients, who usually sign up afterward.

There are no membership or initiation fees. And sessions can be scheduled to fit anyone's time constraints.

"It depends on the situation or the age of the athlete, but we usually recommend three sessions per week," Wiersma said. "However, our biggest competitor is time. Kids are in so many things already."

Wiersma said a big part of his job is moving sessions at the Edge up on an athlete's priority list.

"A lot of parents say they don't want their kid touching a weight," he said. "But they'll let their kid play 85 basketball games. The wear and tear doing that is nothing compared to what we'll do to help them."

The potential for overtraining is taken into account, and if an athlete's body is hurting, workouts at the Edge are scaled back.

Going forward

The Edge concept is not likely to go away anytime soon. If anything, Wiersma sees it growing.

Its Eden Prairie location, where it works with Team FoxJet swimmers and a football company associated with Vikings linebacker E.J. Henderson, is where Wiersma sees the best potential for business growth.

"We really want to be a local and regional household name," he said. "And the bottom line is, we want to make our kids better athletes who are safer both in games and practices."

BRIAN STENSAAS • 612-673-4127 • bstensaas@startribune.com

©2007 Star Tribune. All rights reserved.