

# Eye On Sports Safety

## Eye Protection Should Be A Slam Dunk

(NAPSA)—A quick-thinking tournament doctor put in a call to an ophthalmologist following the gruesome collision between Villanova's Allan Ray and a Pittsburgh player, and that call may have saved Ray's sight. The collision occurred during the March 10 Big East tournament game.

"This young man is very fortunate, as he could have suffered a permanent, basketball-career-ending injury," said John Stechschulte, M.D., Assistant Clinical Professor, Ohio State University and American Academy of Ophthalmology member.

Ophthalmologists agree that many sports eye injuries could be avoided simply by wearing protective eyewear. Athletes can now choose from various types of sturdy, lightweight and effective eyewear. With polycarbonate lenses and a proper fitting by an eye care professional, eyewear does not hinder performance and can prevent 90 percent of sports eye injuries. However, various sports require different types of protective eyewear, and members of the eye health care team can help athletes choose the eyewear appropriate for their sport.

"Fortunately, our nation's ophthalmologists, as demonstrated by the Eye M.D. who saved the player's sight, have the skills and the training to treat patients to minimize the amount of permanent vision loss—or get the athlete back on the playing field," said Dr. Stechschulte. "Prevention could be the most important step in preserving eyesight and keeping athletes in the game."

Todd Baker, Executive Director of the Ohio State Ophthalmologi-



**An on-court collision served as a reminder to coaches and players of the need for protective eyewear.**

cal Society and Director of Ohio's "Play Hard. Don't Blink" Program, adds, "We have been working with little league and softball teams for the last five years to make eye protection part of their standard equipment requirement and will be doing the same with youth basketball teams this year. We need to move toward making protective eyewear part of the sports culture, rather than waiting for cases of serious injuries to impact our habits."

The Academy is the world's largest association of eye physicians and surgeons—Eye M.D.s—with more than 27,000 members worldwide. Eye health care is provided by the three "O's"—opticians, optometrists and ophthalmologists. It is the ophthalmologist, or Eye M.D., who can treat it all—eye diseases and injuries—and perform eye surgery. To find an Eye M.D., visit the Academy's Web site at [www.aao.org](http://www.aao.org).