



For each team that you coach, the team will take a part of you with them. The question then becomes this: What part of you do you wish for them to take?

Coaching youth sports presents many challenges. Coaches are looked upon to not only teach the game, but to also be role models, whilst all too often under the constant scrutiny of some very opinionated parents.

Youth coaches take on the responsibility of developing the players, but they also take on the responsibility of continuing their own personal development.

When an individual becomes a coach he has an opportunity for two things; he can be successful and significant. The difference is success will end when he retires. But the significant role he can play with our young athletes and to some degree their parents will be his legacy which will live forever.

This manual has been put together with the intent of making not only your experience more positive, but also to make the players and parents experience more positive.

It contains a compilation of articles that we believe will benefit you with your development as a coach.

Lakeshore Minor Hockey Federation would like to extend their gratitude to you for your time and effort.

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who at best knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat."

~ Theodore Roosevelt

EXPECTATIONS OF COACHES

All hockey coaches should assist players with progressive improvement of their individual skills, with maximizing their individual potential and with developing a passion and love for the game.

The following concepts apply to all coaches at all levels

Be teachers first: the subject matter is individual, team skills as well as the game of hockey.

Set a good example for players and parents by being a good role model. Balance sportsmanship and winning.

Show respect to other coaches, parents, players, opponents, spectators, officials and the property of others.

Language will be appropriate for a youth hockey environment and not be vulgar, obscene and inappropriate. Gestures of a similar nature will not be directed at anyone.

Focus on teaching skills in a logical progression: simple, complex, application to the game. Correct errors during drills.

Conduct practices that build skills and reinforce teaching methods.

Build players' confidence and self-esteem by rotating demonstrators among all players.

Treat players with respect and achieve a good balance between recognition and criticism. Players should be appropriately recognized in public and criticized in private wherever possible.

Provide equal access to recognition. Statistics should not be used as a means for reward or punishment.

Have a reasonable disciplinary policy for players, appropriate to the age level of the player. Communicate disciplinary policy to both parents and players at the start of the season.

Consistently implement the discipline policy.

At the competitive level, coaches should be creating an environment where all players grow.

At the competitive level, coaches must understand the benefit of a balanced line-up in relation to overall team play, morale, self-esteem and confidence. There should be a fair approach to playing time.

It is mandatory that all coaches (including assistants) are certified.

Coaches are expected to attend scheduled coaches meetings.

Coaches are expected to continue to upgrade their coaching skills

Coaches are expected to uphold the policies of LMHF.

Head coaches must have a parents meeting to discuss discipline, attendance, coaching approach, playing time, team goals, etc. Head coaches should conduct parent meetings during the season to further communications.

COACHES - FAIR PLAY PLEDGE

It is our commitment that all children should enjoy their experience in Lakeshore Hockey and that this enjoyment can be gained both on and off the ice. Developing young people includes: hockey/skating skills, work ethic, social skills, and, responsibility to team members through the interaction on the team. Coaches are there for **all** the players. As is the case with all things, "you get out of this what you put into it" and the more effort put in to developing young people the higher likelihood that we will have a successful hockey program for years to come and they will continue to participate in the sport at higher levels.

It is the intention of this pledge to promote fair play and respect for all participants within the **LAKESHORE MINOR HOCKEY FEDERATION**.

All coaches must sign this pledge before being allowed to participate in hockey and must continue to observe these principles of Fair Play.

FAIR PLAY CODE FOR COACHES

1. I will be reasonable when scheduling games and practices remembering that young athletes have other interests and obligations.
2. I will teach my athletes to play fairly and to respect the rules, officials, opponents and teammates.
3. I will ensure **all** athletes receive equal instruction, discipline, support and appropriate, fair playing time.
4. I will not ridicule or yell at my athletes for making mistakes or for performing poorly. I will remember that children play to have fun and must be encouraged to have confidence in themselves.
5. I will make sure that practices are FUN and match the athlete's ages, technical requirements and ability. In this regard I will make the effort to utilize the resources available to me (e.g. the various resource centers and literature, coaching certification from CAHA, the services of our TD).
6. I will remember that children need a coach they can respect.
7. I will obtain proper training and continue to upgrade my coaching skills.
8. I will remember that a coach is an educator, first and foremost.

I agree to abide by the principles of the FAIR PLAY CODE as set by Hockey Canada and supported by the **LAKESHORE MINOR HOCKEY FEDERATION**

I also agree to abide by the rules, regulations and decisions as set by the **LAKESHORE MINOR HOCKEY FEDERATION**

PRINT

NAME _____ DATE _____

SIGNATURE:

COACH _____ TEAM NO. _____

Establishing a Good Relationship between Coach and Parent

Introduction

One of the most important and challenging relationships facing youth coaches today is that which exists between coach and parent. If it is a poor relationship, it can present many problems and an atmosphere of tension. This, in turn, may create an unpleasant environment for the coach, parent, and most importantly, the athlete. If the coach can develop a good working relationship with the parent, many of the problems can be avoided and the entire experience will be rewarding and enjoyable for everyone involved.

Parents Meeting

One of the most effective methods of communicating the goals and objectives of your program is through a Parents' Orientation Meeting. A face-to-face meeting with all the parents will go a long way toward uniting coaches and parents in a cooperative endeavor that benefits the players. Many potential problems can be eliminated by good communication that begins before the first practice.

The following are some topics that should be addressed at the Parents' Meeting:

Sample Agenda

- A. Introductions
- B. Coaching Philosophy and Primary Goals
- C. Team Rules
- D. Understanding the Sport
- E. Understanding & Minimizing the Risk of Injury
- F. Emergency Procedures
- G. Equipment Needs
- H. The Player's Responsibilities
- I. The Parents' Responsibilities
- J. The Season Schedule
- K. Team Budget
- L. Question and Answer Period

A. Introductions

At this time, introduce yourself and your coaching staff to the group of parents. If you wish, have an association official make the introductions. As the coach, you should briefly describe your background, coaching experience, and your reasons for coaching. The parents should also introduce themselves and indicate how long they have been involved in the program.

Explain the meaning and importance of the orientation meeting, which is designed to create good coach/parent relationships for the benefit of the children. Also, it is helpful to distribute handouts of the meeting agenda to the parents. This provides structure to the meeting and a place for parents to take notes.

B. Coaching Philosophy and Primary Goals

Present your personal goals and objectives for the upcoming season. Your coaching philosophy should emphasize fun, the teaching of fundamental skills, teamwork, sportsmanship, and respect for others. This is very important for building your credibility as a coach.

C. Team Rules

Make sure parents understand what is expected of them and their kids (things such as arrival times (practices/games), curfews, dress codes, commitment). Ensure that not only the rules are explained but the repercussions of not abiding by the rules are discussed as well. These should all be discussed and accepted at the parents meeting so that there are no surprises later on in the year.

D. Understanding the Sport

Many times during the course of the season, spectators question officials, shout instructions to players or contradict the coach because they are unaware of the rules or lack a basic understanding of the sport of hockey. This can often place a strain on the coach/parent relationship. By reviewing some basic concepts and rules, you can help avoid these situations.

E. Understanding & Minimizing the Risk of Injury

Parents should be told what they can expect in terms of possible injuries in hockey.

Injury prevention measures that are commonly used for games and practices should be outlined. Parents should be assured that the playing/practice area and equipment will be checked to help keep players safe and free from hazards. They should be told of the availability of first aid and who is responsible for its administration.

F. Emergency Procedures

Have the parents provide the information necessary for you to handle an emergency (parents' names, addresses, telephone numbers, names and telephone numbers of family doctors and the hospital of preference). You should also describe the procedures that will be used in case of an emergency.

G. Equipment Needs

Explain what equipment the players need and where it can be purchased. You may also want to offer advice on the quality of skates, sticks, helmets, etc., and indicate how much parents can expect to pay for specific items.

You might want to bring an example of the equipment that each player will need and provide tips on the proper care and maintenance of equipment.

H. The Player's Responsibilities

Children must assume certain responsibilities if they wish to play ice hockey, including good sportsmanship, teamwork, and being on time for practices and games. Also, cooperating with coaches and teammates, developing team and individual skills, and abiding by the official playing rules are responsibilities that players should embrace.

These responsibilities should be discussed so that parents can help reinforce them at home.

I. The Parents' Responsibilities

Parents of young athletes have many responsibilities that should be discussed at the Parents Meeting. Now is the time to discuss them so they understand their responsibilities within the framework of the team

Take this opportunity to ask parents for their assistance over the course of the season. Telephoning, refreshments after games, hosting of visiting teams and assisting with travel arrangements to out-of-town games are some areas that may be discussed.

J. The Season Schedule

Provide the parents with a schedule of games and practices for the upcoming season (if possible). Otherwise advise the parents how this information will be delivered to them and when. Also, inform the parents as to when players are expected to arrive at practices and games and when they will be available to leave.

You may also wish to provide a list of all the players' addresses and phone numbers for the parents.

K. Team Budget

Review the team budget with the parents and make sure it is acceptable to all. At no time is it acceptable to add "non-hockey" items to the budget (such as clothing). The budget such cover only items related to the running of a hockey program (i.e. tournaments, extra ice, team activities etc).

L. Question and Answer Period

Concluding the meeting with a question-and-answer period will provide parents with an opportunity to raise any concerns they may have.

Summary

Parents can be a great asset to a hockey team as well as a positive influence. By inviting them to talk with you about how you perceive your role as coach, the purpose of the Lakeshore Minor Hockey program, and the responsibilities that they and their children have to the team, you are helping create a good coach/parent relationship.

Codes of Conduct

The following guidelines are a supplement to the LMHF Code of Conduct. Please review both with the parents and players.

Coaches Code of Conduct

- Winning is a consideration, but not the only one, nor the most important one. Care more about the child than the winning of the game. Remember players are involved in hockey for fun and enjoyment.
- Be a positive role model to your players, display emotional maturity and be alert to the physical safety of players.
- Be generous with your praise when it is deserved; be consistent, honest; be fair and just; do not criticize players publicly; learn to be a more effective communicator and coach, don't yell at players.
- Adjust to personal needs and problems of players, be a good listener, never verbally or physically abuse a player or official; give all players the opportunity to improve their skills, gain confidence and develop self-esteem; teach them the basics.
- Organize practices that are fun and challenging for your players. Familiarize yourself with the rules, techniques and strategies of hockey; encourage all your players to be team players.
- Maintain an open line of communication with your players' parents. Explain the goals and objectives of your association.
- Be concerned with the overall development of your players. Stress good health habits and clean living.
- To play the game is great; to love the game is greater.

Parents Code of Conduct

- Do not force your children to participate in sports, but support their desires to play their chosen sport. Children are involved in organized sports for their enjoyment. Make it fun.
- Encourage your child to play by the rules. Remember, children learn best by example, so applaud the good plays of both teams.
- Do not embarrass your child by yelling at players, coaches, or officials. By showing a positive attitude toward the game and all of its participants, your child will benefit.
- Emphasize skill development and practices and how they benefit your young athlete. De-emphasize games and competition in the lower age groups.
- Know and study the rules of the game, and support the officials on and off the ice. This approach will help in the development and support of the game. Any criticism of the officials only hurts the game.
- Applaud a good effort in victory and in defeat and enforce the positive points of the game. Never yell or physically abuse your child after a game or practice - it is destructive. Work toward removing the physical and verbal abuse in youth sports.
- Recognize the importance of volunteer coaches. They are very important to the development of your child and the sport. Communicate with them and support them.
- If you enjoy the game, learn all you can about the game, and volunteer!

Players Code of Conduct

- Play for FUN!
- Work hard to improve your skills.
- Be a team player - get along with your teammates.
- Learn teamwork, sportsmanship and discipline.
- Be on time for practices and games.
- Learn the rules, and play by them. Always be a good sport.
- Respect your coach, your teammates, your parents, opponents and officials.
- Never argue with the official's decision

What is a Coach

A coach can be many things to many different people. A coach is a teacher, a mentor, a role model, sometimes a friend and confidant. Most of all though a coach must be positive. Below are listed traits of a positive coach.

Puts players first:

A positive coach wants to win but understands that he is first and foremost an educator with the development of his players his top priority. He understands that children go through developmental stages and uses age-appropriate coaching strategies. He values the long-term welfare of his players more than looking good as a coach. He avoids the trap of thinking the game is about him rather than for the players. Where winning is in conflict with the long-term benefit of the athletes, a positive coach has an unwavering commitment to what is best for the athletes.

Develops character as well as skills:

A positive coach uses the crucible of competition as a virtual classroom. She seizes upon victory and defeat as teachable moments--opportunities to build in her athletes' self-confidence and positive character traits such as determination, courage, empathy and commitment. She wants to win, but even more wants to transmit lessons that will carry over into the rest of her athletes' lives". She is loyal to players and reluctant to "give up" on them, especially "at-risk" athletes who have the most to gain from participating in sports.

Fosters internal motivation:

A positive coach encourages players to develop internal motivation with minimal reliance on external punishment and rewards. He listens to and seeks information from his players to learn to better tap into their internal motivation. He is himself internally motivated and sets an example for players.

Coaches for mastery:

A positive coach coaches for mastery rather than victory, which she sees as a by-product of the pursuit of excellence. She focuses on effort rather than outcome, learning rather than comparison to others. She recognizes that mistakes are an important and inevitable part of learning and encourages an environment in which players are willing to risk making a mistake. She sets standards of continuous learning and improvement for herself and her players. She encourages and inspires her players, whatever their level of mastery, to strive to get better without threatening them. She is committed to becoming the best coach she can be and continually seeks to improve her own effectiveness.

Refuses to motivate through fear, intimidation, or shame:

A positive coach establishes order and discipline in a positive manner. Many coaches are positive when things are going well and the team is winning. A positive coach works to remain positive even through losing streaks. He recognizes that it is often when things go wrong that a coach can have the most positive impact and teach the most important lessons. Regardless of the adversity involved, he refuses to demean himself or his players by resorting to fear, intimidation or shame. He always treats athletes with respect regardless of how well they perform.

Creates a partnership with players:

A positive coach resists an authoritarian role in which players are conditioned to please the coach. She involves team members in determining team rules. She recognizes that communication is the lifeblood of effective relationships and works hard to establish clear and effective two-way communication with her players. She seeks to win the cooperation of her players through encouragement and treats them as partners working together to achieve mutual goals.

Honors the Game:

A positive coach feels an obligation to the sport he coaches. He loves his sport and shares his love and enjoyment with his players. He feels privileged to be able to take part in his sport. He respects his opponents, recognizing that a worthy opponent will push him and his team to do their best. He understands the important role that officials play and strives to show them respect even when he disagrees with their decisions. He values the rich tradition of his sport and works to honor the spirit as well as the letter of its rules. A positive coach demonstrates personal integrity and would rather lose than win by dishonoring the game. Dishonoring the game is worse than defeat.

Positive coaching should be anywhere and everywhere. It does not, and should not stop at any level. It is, without doubt, the best way to coach. Expectations grow as you move up the levels, but even at college level, even on the National team or a PRO team, etc. you are still teaching the game. There is no level, where as a coach, you cease teaching the game. As long as you teach, teach in a positive manner. It will produce the best players, and ultimately, the best results.

GOOD COACHING

By Lori Reynolds“

“What is a good coach?”

“Why is HE a good coach?”

“What makes him different from other coaches?”

I’ve been asked these questions—or ones similar—many times over my years of being a soccer mom. My son has had the same coach for almost four years, and no matter what organization the team plays with, I make sure we stay with the same coach. Why? That’s easy. He possesses qualities that I feel are essential and necessary for being a positive influence and good coach, such as:

PATIENCE—This is probably the most important characteristic. Let’s face it—12 active boys together require a lot of attention. A good coach is one who doesn’t expect angels on the soccer field.

TOLERANCE—This quality goes hand-in-hand with patience. Kids are going to be rowdy, or moody or lazy. Tolerance takes the different mind-sets and turns the focus to the tasks “afoot”.

ACCEPTANCE—Our children are so very different. Each one has varied potential and skill levels. A good coach is one who recognizes each child as an individual and he/she encourages that child to perform at his/her very best level. Perfection is not required!

MOTIVATION—Soccer can be viewed as kids kicking a ball across the field, or it can be viewed as an opportunity for growth. The true test lies in sparking a child’s interest to learn and grow and keeping that spark alive each season.

RESPECT—I’ve seen many games in which the coaches, and sometimes parents, of the other teams berate and belittle their children for making “mistakes”. Sometimes they even go as far as criticizing opposing team members. Good grief! We’re playing U-10 soccer! This isn’t the World Cup. ‘Coach’ has never singled out a child for making a mistake and he does not allow parents or the other team members to do so either. At the beginning of every season ‘Coach’ reminds us parents that we’re all in this sport to learn and have a good time.

SPORTSMANSHIP—Perhaps this should have been on top of the list, but being toward the end does not lessen the importance. My definition of sportsmanship is to teach kids to work together as a team in order to achieve a common goal. It also means teaching kids to respect other players as well as each other. Insults are not tolerated. Mistakes are team mistakes, and they are used as teaching tools for the next game.

ABILITY TO TEACH—Sounds simple, right? It’s not. How many times has a parent signed up a child for a sport, only to have a well-intentioned father decide to coach? He may or may not know the sport. He may or may not relate well to his players. There is a huge difference between the team whose members do what is yelled at them, and the team whose members actually understand what to do and why. A good coach teaches his players basic fundamentals, explains concepts and enables his/her players to think logically when making a play. One of our practice mantras is “You’ve got a man X and a man X. The ball comes to you. What do you do”? The kids are able to use logic and make the best choices based on situations.

One of the reasons we parents encourage our kids to play sports is to hopefully broaden their horizons and to give them additional skills they wouldn’t get otherwise. While having a winning season is

great, I consider it a bonus and not the main purpose. Playing sports should be a positive experience, and it should be one that children look forward to each and every season.

LOVE OF KIDS: They have the energy to make every practice and every game a new experience for coaches and parents alike. Without their vision and energy, sports would be dull and unappreciated. They offer a day-to-day challenge for coaches, which is contagious and which is motivation for everyone involved in athletics at all levels.

LOVE OF THE GAME: Coaches must love their sport, and, more importantly, must show their players enthusiasm for every aspect of the game. This would include techniques and tactics. The love of the game must also show to the players the love for fair-play, respect for the opponents, officials, and spectators, and positive reinforcement for team mates. Only a good coach who loves the game can provide the correct aspects involved in the winning and losing of competition.

Teaching Youngsters How to be Good Sports

by Dr. Darrell J. Burnett

"Sports do not build character. They reveal it." - Heywood Hale Broun

We're living in an age where the preservation of traditional values can no longer be taken for granted. It seems we need to have reminders (books, movies, newspaper articles, etc.) to maintain our awareness of the importance of preserving the basic human values, which are essential to the survival of a community.

It's no different in the world of sports. The traditional value of sportsmanship is being challenged from all sides: professional, college, high school, and even in youth sports. There are some who say sportsmanship is becoming a lost art and that unless we remind ourselves of the essentials of sportsmanship it will gradually fade as other values have done in our society.

In the midst of all this, it seems doubly important that we recommit ourselves to guiding our youth, reminding them what sportsmanship is all about, rewarding them for showing good sportsmanship and showing, by our example, that sportsmanship is still alive and valued in youth sports today.

Here's a 10-item checklist for kids to follow as they try to develop a habit of good sportsmanship.

<p><u>Sportsmanship Checklist for Kids</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> I abide by the rules of the game.<input type="checkbox"/> I try to avoid arguments.<input type="checkbox"/> I share in the responsibilities of the team.<input type="checkbox"/> I give everyone a chance to play according to the rules.<input type="checkbox"/> I always play fair.<input type="checkbox"/> I follow the directions of the coach.<input type="checkbox"/> I respect the other team's effort.<input type="checkbox"/> I offer encouragement to my teammates.<input type="checkbox"/> I accept the judgment calls of the game officials.<input type="checkbox"/> I end the game smoothly.	<p><u>Sportsmanship is the ability to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• win without gloating (don't rub it in)• lose without complaining (don't make excuses)• treat your opponent, and the officials, with respect <p><u>Sportsmanship Tips:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you make a mistake don't pout or make excuses. Learn from it, and be ready to continue to play.• If a teammate makes a mistake, encourage, don't criticize.
---	--

The T.E.A.M. Approach

by Michael Josephson

This four-point strategy for achieving the objectives of the Pursuing Victory With Honor campaign is captured in the acronym T.E.A.M. — *teach, enforce, advocate* and *model*. These four elements should guide the design of all elements of programs to promote sportsmanship and foster good character as well as guide interactions with athletes, parents, coaches, officials and spectators.

Teach

In order to enhance the character-building and sportsmanship aspects of your sports program it is essential that administrators and coaches consciously and consistently seek to teach how to think and act in ways that develop and demonstrate the "Six Pillars of Character": *trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring* and *good citizenship*. This is best accomplished by following a coherent plan.

Commit.

- Assure that the Pursuing Victory With Honor character-building and sportsmanship objectives are a clearly stated central purpose of your athletic program.
- Review existing mission and purpose statements.
- Rewrite to include language from Pursuing Victory With Honor
- Ask governing bodies to adopt or recommit to statements stressing character-building and sportsmanship objectives
- Put mission statement prominently on all literature
- Assure that all coaches, parents, athletes and sports officials understand mission

Specify. Adopt or incorporate in existing codes the Pursuing Victory With Honor codes of conduct for teacher-coaches, student-athletes, parents and other constituencies that specify desired attitudes and conduct and consciously use the T.E.A.M. process and the Six Pillars.

Publicize. Develop a plan to demonstrate pervasive commitment to the principles and goals of the Pursuing Victory With Honor campaign, including: posters, banners, awards, and written reinforcements on schedules, rosters, descriptive materials, websites, etc.

Integrate. Instruct administrators and coaches to integrate the principles of Pursuing Victory With Honor in:

- Team selection and recruiting

- Parent and athlete orientation meetings
- Game strategies
- Game recap
- Continuous verbal reinforcement
- Team rules and discipline actions

Enforce

Mere teaching and preaching about the ideals of sportsmanship and good character represented by the Six Pillars will not be enough. It is essential that you demonstrate courage and firmness in consistently holding coaches, athletes, parents and others to those expectations.

Expectations. Establish clear conduct expectations for athletes, coaches, parents, spectators and others.

Consequences.

- Reward good conduct and personal development by positive recognition. Firmly discourage bad behavior by immediate correction and prompt discipline.
- Verbally praise model behavior and correct misbehavior as often as possible with both athletes and coaches.
- Recognize athletes and coaches who demonstrate exceptional sportsmanship and character after games and in post-season awards.
- Make demonstrations of good character and sportsmanship a job requirement for coaches and a factor in playing time (e.g., bench players who violate conduct expectations regardless of the competitive situation).
- Correct parents and spectators who fail to meet expectations through private meetings, letters, announcements, warnings and ejection from games or practices.

Advocate

Be a vigorous advocate of character and sportsmanship in everything you say and do. Be clear and uncompromising that you want and expect your athletes to demonstrate the Six Pillars in everything they do. Make it a matter of pride in the team and in oneself.

Team Captains. Give team captains special responsibility to promote and encourage teammates to develop a sense of pride.

Comment. Comment on the personal development of athletes and the sportsmanship aspects of every competition regardless of the outcome.

Model

Your lessons about sportsmanship and character will be undermined if you engage in or allow athletes, coaches, parents or spectators to engage in contradictory conduct.

Role Modeling. Assure that everyone representing your athletic program understands the responsibility to be careful and self-conscious about setting a good example by honoring the Six Pillars on and off the field.

Send Only Positive Messages. Everything you say and do — in organizing your team, conducting practices, during the competition itself and in post-event commentary — sends messages about your values and character. Be sure that these messages are positive and reinforcing of the mission of your sports program.

Pursuing Victory With Honor

The title of this campaign — "Pursuing Victory With Honor" — makes clear our philosophy that sports best achieves its positive impact on participants and society when everyone plays to win. In fact, without the passionate pursuit of victory much of the enjoyment, as well as the educational and spiritual value, of sports will be lost. Winning is important and trying to win is essential.

Winning Is Important, but Honor Is More Important. Quality sports programs should not trivialize or demonize either the desire to win or the importance of actually winning. It is disrespectful to athletes and coaches who devote huge portions of their lives to being the best they can in the pursuit of individual victories, records, championships and medals, to dismiss the importance of victory by saying, "It's only a game." The greatest value of sports is its ability to enhance the character and uplift the ethics of participants and spectators.

Ethics Is Essential to True Winning. The best strategy to improve sports is not to de-emphasize winning but to more vigorously emphasize that adherence to ethical standards and sportsmanship in the honorable pursuit of victory is essential to winning in its true sense. It is one thing to be declared the winner, it is quite another to really win.

There Is No True Victory Without Honor. Cheating and bad sportsmanship are simply not options because they rob victories of meaning and value and replace the inspirational high ideals of true sport with the degrading and petty values of a dog-eat-dog marketplace. Victories attained in dishonorable ways are hollow and degrade the concept of sport.

Ethics and Sportsmanship Are Ground Rules. Programs that adopt Pursuing Victory With Honor are expected to take whatever steps are necessary to assure that coaches and athletes are committed to principles of ethics and sportsmanship as *ground rules* governing the pursuit of victory. Their responsibilities to demonstrate and develop good character must never be subordinated to the desire to win. It is never proper to act unethically to win.

Benefits of Sports Come From the Competition, Not the Outcome. Quality amateur sports programs are based on the belief that the vital lessons and great value of sports are learned from the honorable pursuit of victory, from the competition itself rather than the outcome. They do not permit coaches or others to send the message that the most important benefits derived from athletic competition can only be achieved when an athlete or a team wins.

What Do Player Hear From You?

I was reading an article recently about the relationship between teachers and students and it got me to thinking about the role of the coach as an educator. While most of us who get involved in coaching minor sports probably don't envision ourselves as educators, in fact we are just that "teachers". While it's easy to get caught up in the glory of winning games and championships, it is far more difficult for most to truly understand that part of their role as a coach is to educate and prepare their players for more than just the next game. The way you treat them will have a huge impact on the way they develop not only as athletes but as individuals as well. They are more likely to listen to you as a coach than they will their parents. Most players will gladly go through a brick wall for a coach. I'm not so sure they would be as willing for a parent.

Now, think back to your times in school and who were the most successful teachers, who left the biggest impression on you, whose class did you look forward to every day? If you are like me, it was the ones that found new ways to reach their students. I always enjoyed the ones that were able to think outside the box and treated everyone with respect and dignity. They allowed individuality to shine. They did not try to put everyone into little compartments that were easy to deal with and discard those that didn't fit in. That's not to say they weren't demanding or that it was anarchy. But they found a way to reach you without resorting to negativity and a boot camp mentality. While we will all agree that coaching/teaching kids can be a challenge, it is not without its rewards. That's why we get involved in coaching minor sports. That and the \$\$\$\$.

Where is he going with this you ask.... Keep reading!

So when players aren't playing to their potential is the answer to bench them? When players make mistakes, is the answer to berate them? When a player costs you a game, is the answer to make sure that everyone knows it was that players fault. There is a fine line between a negative statement designed to motivate and challenge an athlete, and statements that are humiliating, degrading, and shaming? As coaches/educators, it is important to be aware of the impact and the difference. Once spoken it is often very difficult to take back the negative degrading comments. How many times have we wished that we had only thought twice and spoken once? But the words tumbled out and just like toothpaste you just can't get it back in the tube...no matter how hard you try. Some of the remarks players have shared over the years (made to them by their coaches –who by the way were sometimes their parent): - "Are you *trying* to lose this game on purpose?!" "You're not worth the price of your uniform." "Hey, this is the way I coach. If you don't like it, you know where the door is!" "What are you guys, some kind of (expletive deleted) (followed by a word usually associated with someone who is intellectually handicapped)." , this after a loss in a meaningless regular season game. Then there is the ever popular challenge of the male athletes' manhood or sexuality when they don't play as tough as the coach wants.

Repetition and patterns of negative communication can be highly destructive to a young person's self-esteem and their spirit, especially when it comes from someone they admire: you, their coach!

Remember the argument between the Wind and the Sun? Both thought they were the strongest. To settle their argument, they selected a traveler walking on a road below them. The Wind said, "Watch, I am so strong that I can blow the coat right off that person." The Wind blew and blew, and blew some more. The traveler simply wrapped her/his arms tighter to prevent the coat from flying away. Finally, the Wind gave up and said, "It can't be done." The Sun smiled and said, "Perhaps there is another way." And the Sun began to beam down on the traveler. Soon the traveler was loosening that tight hold on the coat as the air warmed and felt comfortable. As the Sun continued to radiate its warmth, the traveler relaxed, smiled, and began to look around, enjoying the scenery and the road ahead. *And took off the coat!*

Every time your players walk in and out of one of your team functions, how do they feel and what will they hear from you? Do they wrap their arms around themselves as protection from the negative environment and words they hear? Or will your athletes feel comfortable to learn from their mistakes without fear of retribution and public embarrassment?

Will they be met with another wind bag blowing up at them or with encouragement and support? What will they hear from you: IT'S YOUR CHOICE!

Remember: Motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it.

Coaching: It's Not About Winning or Loosing!

So you're thinking of becoming a volunteer coach. Good for you! Still reluctant, think you're not qualified. Excellent! This tells me you may be the one. Through your willingness to question your own knowledge you have shown that you possess one of the key elements for success. You care enough about others to honestly evaluate yourself. This sign of good character combined with the right resources of knowledge will drive you in providing your team with a great experience.

Hopefully, now that your interests in becoming a coach are growing, it's time to pause and set your priorities. Most people place the gathering of the mechanical knowledge about a specific sport as the highest priority but for now lets focus on a more important element of coaching, (philosophy). Your philosophy will guide you through all of the aspect of becoming a coach.

You must have a philosophy that you can apply and communicate to others. You must commit to it and be ready to define and defend it. Remember that it is the foundation on which you will build the team. Good or bad, it will define you as a person and leave a profound impression on all others. I imagine the question that you are now asking yourself is this: How can I know what my philosophy is if I haven't coached before? The answer is right there inside of you. Your philosophy should be based on what kind of a person you are or aspire to be. To rely on anything else will be seen as false and will fail.

Now, we come to the most important aspect in becoming a coach. It's time to find out what kind of person you truly are. In order to determine this, one question must be asked. Are you a person of good character or of poor character? The following are examples of each and they are not exclusive to youth athletics. They appear in coaches at all levels. These traits are what you will need to be aware of in order to determine your ability to become a good coach.

If you are a person of good character and place all others before yourself, you will do well. If you show each team member that you value him or her with equally high regard and respect, you will succeed. A good coach will always reach for the positive in all situations. They will not attempt to turn their team members into what they think they should be, but rather, to help them in realizing their full value to themselves and the team for what they already are. A

good coach will have an unwavering belief in every member of the team. They will have no excuses and no fear. This will show through as a result of their complete confidence in knowing that they are doing things for all of the right reasons. Their philosophy will be based on full inclusion and equal participation for all team members regardless of circumstances, skill level or age. This in turn will give rise to a mutual respect and appreciation amongst all members of the team. It will produce the most powerful force that can exist within team athletics, the team's absolute belief in one another.

If you are a person of poor character, your main motive for coaching will be for the purpose of serving or protecting your own self-interests. A poor coach will view their team as nothing more than subjects to dictate to. Through their own actions and words they will create divisiveness amongst the team members and in general have little respect for them as people. They will have their "chosen ones" and God help the rest. A poor coach will have difficulty in communicating with the team and all others. They will be sarcastic and negative. Their lack of confidence within certain members of the team will be clearly demonstrated through their willingness to take actions that serve only to demean or exclude. A poor coach will rationalize to themselves that certain team members will be willing to accept a role of lesser importance due to their perceived lower skill level and therefore settle for little or no playing time. Unfortunately this difference in skill is more often a result of poor or biased coaching than it is of the player's true ability.

A poor coach will inevitably adopt the "win at all costs" mentality. This is when certain team members are excluded while others are elevated through increased opportunity, all of which only leads to the weakening or destruction of the team. This process will always result in failure, for it ignores the essence of what team truly means. Team means all, not just some, and no one understands or expects this more than the team itself.

So, there you are. Which type of person and therefore coach will you be? For the right person, becoming a good coach is quite simple. It requires only one thing, a good character. Most certainly mistakes will be made along the way but as long as people can recognize your genuineness to learn and to be fair to all team members, you will not fail.

In general a coach's first priority should be in determining how they are going to interact with their team and how they wish for the team to interact with them, but most importantly, each other.

For each team that you coach, the team will take a part of you with them. The question then becomes this: What part of you do you wish for them to take? Your character and philosophy will determine this

Emphasizing Sportsmanship in Youth Sports

Coaches, teachers, and parents serve as role models for sportsmanlike behaviors in children. This story from the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports examines the latest research on the topic of developing sportsmanship.

This article is reprinted with permission from *Spotlight on Youth Sports*, a publication of the [Institute for the Study of Youth Sports \(YSI\)](#). The Institute at Michigan State University was founded by the Michigan Legislature in 1978 to research the benefits and detriments of participation in youth sports; to produce educational materials for parents, coaches, officials, and administrators; and to provide educational programs for coaches, officials, administrators, and parents. Click [here](#) for more information about the Institute's newsletter.

A young basketball player takes a cheap shot at her opponent and does not get caught by the referee. After the game, she gloats about the action and her teammates congratulate her on the move.

After placing second in the finals of the 100-meter freestyle, a disappointed swimmer walks away from an opponent's handshake and throws his goggles on the deck.

The actions of those individuals may not make the headlines of your local paper or gain as much press as delinquent athletes. Yet, those behaviors are unsportsmanlike. Sportsmanship involves a striving for success, while maintaining a commitment to being fair, honest, and respectful [and] to following the rules -- all of which is synonymous with being ethical or moral. (See references 5 and 8 below.) In fact, young athletes (10-18 years) identified five dimensions to sportsmanship:

- A full commitment to sport participation.
- Respect for the rules and officials.
- Concern for social conventions (such as being a good loser).
- Respect for opponents.
- Avoidance of the winning-at-all-costs mentality. (12)

In regard to those definitions, the behaviors illustrated in the opening scenarios are clearly outside the lines of sportsmanship. The question that arises is, *Where* did those athletes learn unsportsmanlike behaviors? And the more pressing question for sports leaders, *What* is the role of sport in nurturing sportsmanlike or unsportsmanlike behavior? It is contended that the choices made by an athlete to engage in sportsmanlike conduct depend, in part, on how the sport is structured by administrators, coaches, parents, and fans.

Children learn moral behavior from engaging with others, watching the behaviors of others, and/or being taught ethical behavior. Sportsmanship attitudes and behaviors are learned in a like manner. Therefore, being involved in sport alone is not sufficient to ensure that participants will learn sportsmanlike attitudes and behaviors. Rather it is the "social interactions that are fostered by the sport experience" that will determine the

benefit of sport to athletes. (8) [Achieving that benefit] requires that designated leaders within the sport take action to teach ethical and moral behavior in sport.

STRUCTURING SPORT FOR SPORTSMANSHIP

How sport is structured by the community, administrators, and coaches can determine whether or not children learn sportsmanlike behaviors. The emphasis within the sport program becomes the [means] by which the child learns what is appropriate and/or acceptable behavior. Research has shown that the philosophy of a program, the goals for the team, and the teaching and modeling behaviors of adults can influence sportsmanlike behaviors.

The philosophy underlying a program can have an impact on what athletes perceive as appropriate behavior in a sport. Youth in Tai Kwon Do reported lower levels of anxiety and aggression, increased self-esteem, and improved social skills in comparison to those students who received only self-defense skills. (11) Participation in sport does not necessarily lead to sportsmanlike behavior (in this case, lower aggression and improved social skills) unless sportsmanship (in the form of reflection and meditation) is emphasized within the program.

An overemphasis on winning in a sport may also cloud perceptions of moral behavior. For example, boys engaged in a Kickball World Series were less likely to be cooperative than boys who were just given the opportunity to engage in free play were. The authors concluded that an "emphasis on winning in organized sport may lead children to become rivalrous in social interactions with other children," which may in turn lead to a decline in helping others. (6) Overemphasis on winning in sport can also lead individuals (athletes, coaches, and parents alike) to engage in antisocial or delinquent behaviors aimed at trying to gain an advantage to win. For example, a mother forged a birth certificate for her 17-year-old son so that he could play in a league for 14-year-olds; and a coach secretly injected oranges with amphetamines, and then fed them to his unknowing 10- to 12-year-old football players to get them up for a game. (9)

Research suggests that the goals emphasized by an individual or a program may impact moral development/sportsmanlike behavior. (3, 4, 10) Athletes who focus on self-mastery and personal improvement (ie., task-oriented) are more likely to perceive the purpose of sport as teaching values such as working hard, cooperating with others, and becoming good citizens. Further, those athletes did not endorse cheating and expressed approval for sportsmanlike behaviors in contrast to individuals who placed an emphasis on beating others (e.g., ego-oriented). Individuals who focused on beating others more often viewed intentional, injurious acts as legitimate and were more tempted to violate sportsmanship attitudes and behaviors.

Teaching and modeling appropriate behaviors can...enhance sportsmanlike behaviors. For example, two moral intervention programs were introduced at a youth sport camp. The first (structural developmental) involved teaching one moral concept a week (e.g., fairness, sharing, aggression) over five weeks. The instructors also exposed moral issues

as they arose in play and coached children to appropriate resolutions of the issues. Children (ages 5 to 7) in this intervention program understood the differences between right and wrong better than those who did not receive such training (ie., control group). The second intervention involved the instructor just demonstrating moral behavior when appropriate. This group also did better than a control group (who only participated in the sport program); however, this intervention was slightly less effective than the first intervention. (2) Children, thus, learn moral (sportsmanlike) behavior directly from instruction and indirectly by observing the responses of coaches and parents.

CREATING A CLIMATE THAT FOSTERS SPORTSMANSHIP ATTITUDE

The key to improving the quality of sport experiences for young athletes is to emphasize the totality of the sport experience rather than just playing the game. (9) This concept means structuring a program philosophy for sportsmanship, being prepared to teach moral reasoning when situations occur, and monitoring your own behavioral (verbal and nonverbal) responses to situations. Programs can create a climate that fosters the development of sportsmanship by establishing a positive philosophy, striving for excellence, teaching moral principles, and providing positive role models.

Program Philosophy. A philosophy aimed at sportsmanship should focus on conveying sportsmanlike attitudes and behaviors to athletes. This philosophy suggests a more thoughtful approach to creating ethical standards within a team by setting up guidelines for appropriate behavior and providing opportunities within practices to incorporate sportsmanlike ideals. If this approach has already been adopted, it is also important to examine the coaching philosophy and compare it to where efforts are directed. Are [coaching] behaviors in line with [philosophy]?

- Do I scream or yell at my players often?
- Have I ever blamed a loss on an official?
- Would I promote animosity between two teammates to motivate them?
- Would I run up the score on an opponent for any reason?
- Do I treat my players differently after a loss than after a win?

Answering "yes" to any of those questions requires a reexamination of program philosophy and behaviors.

Striving for Excellence. John Wooden in his many successful years of coaching always emphasized striving for excellence. As long as athletes are putting forth the effort and attempting to achieve new heights, success can be realized. That process did not mean that winning would always occur, or that winning was placed at the top of the list; rather, it laid the [foundation] for future success for both the team and the individual. "Everyone can be a success because success relates to the effort put into realizing one's personal potential." (9) Children should focus on skill mastery, feeling better about themselves (ie., improving their perceived ability), and enjoying their sport experience. [C]oaches

should remind [them]selves that striving for excellence will lead to many future successes and, more importantly, will provide a positive experience for young athletes.

Teaching Moral Principles. Teaching athletes moral principles will also help build sportsmanlike behaviors. Coaches are encouraged to look for teachable moments when moral dilemmas arise on the floor or in practice in order to guide young athletes. For example, when a young swimmer refuses to shake an opponent's hand and makes a scene, the coach can use that moment to teach the athlete appropriate behavior. Teaching the athlete to view an opponent as a vehicle to challenge personal skills, and that a personal best time is a goal to strive for and nothing to be disappointed in, allows the coach to shape the sportsmanlike attitudes and behaviors of young athletes. Teaching sportsmanlike behaviors may also be aimed at overcoming the accepted norm of a sport that is emphasized by society (e.g., starting a fight in hockey). By practicing and being guided through ethical dilemmas in sport, athletes commit themselves to the principles perceived in the environment. Therefore, rather than sport being dictated by social norms, the coach becomes a vehicle for teaching positive moral principles.

Being a Positive Role Model. As noted earlier, modeling sportsmanlike (moral) behaviors within the sporting environment increases children's level of sportsmanlike behaviors. Thus, what coaches do on the playing field or in the gym sends a message about appropriate behaviors to the children. To help in this endeavor, the following checklist (5) for monitoring our behaviors may serve as a guide:

- Is it right?
- Is it against the rules?
- Is it fair to everyone involved?
- Would my ethical role models do it?

Coaches should be ethical role models for young athletes through their own actions and through structuring sport for sportsmanship.

Sport provides many opportunities to teach sportsmanship; however, [the result] clearly depends on how coaches, parents, administrators, and practitioners structure sport experiences. By emphasizing sportsmanlike ideals in sports programs, coaches can create a climate that fosters the development of sportsmanship while also striving for excellence

Equal Playing Time for All

Richard Stratton

CYS received a question asking about our feelings on the emotional impact on a child who consistently plays 1/4 of a game while the other teammates play the entire game. This question raises a broader issue. What is the fundamental purpose of youth sports? How should this purpose be reflected in practices and games? Granted we are raising somewhat of a philosophical issue here, and probably a controversial one at that! As has been reflected in some of our previous articles, we believe that the primary purpose of youth sports should be to teach fundamental sports skills in a non threatening environment. That is, children should have the opportunity to learn new skills and improve previously learned skills and have fun doing it. Coaches must create an environment both in practices and games where children are not afraid to make mistakes. Using fear of failure as a motivational technique is unacceptable. Mistakes happen as part of the learning process. Children who hope to become better skilled so they can move on to more advanced levels of competition have to be willing to take risks and experiment with more advanced skill techniques and strategies. They will not do this if they are afraid of making mistakes. All members of any team come to the team expecting equal opportunities. They have the right to expect equal quality and quantity of coaching in practice. They all must be given the same opportunity to try out what they learn in practices in game situations. In fact, games should be considered an extension of practices, another opportunity to learn. An athlete can not learn much by sitting on the bench. Sports involve movement, physical skills. They are best learned by doing, not watching.

Equal Playing Time: Earning The Right

By Derek Wade

*A article I read recently on your **Coaching Youth Sports**, entitled "Equal Playing Time for All" by Richard Stratton really bothered me. As a youth coach, I operate under the assumption that my responsibility is to improve the players on my team; to make them competitive, teach them how to play as a team, and yes, to teach them to win. Youth sports is not entirely about numbers on a scoreboard, but the kids want to win just as badly as their adult counterparts in the NFL and NCAA do, except my players exhibit a considerable amount more class, discipline, self-respect, and sportsmanship. Part of winning is putting forth a*

winning effort. This starts in practice, and then carries forth onto the game field.

According to this article, a game is simply an extension of the week's practice. This is a point of view. In all seriousness, a game should be used by any decent coach as an opportunity to give his weaker players experience. I, personally, have a hard and fast substitution rule. To start with, I have a minimum play rule of eight plays for every player. This rule is my own, and not my league's. Accompanying this rule is a rule for the coaches: at any time in the game, when the score shows my team either up by two touchdowns or down by three my starters leave the field, beginning with the defense and the starting offensive backfield. This can happen as early as the first quarter, and has done so. In fact, a number of the starters on my last team in later games earned their positions by demonstrating their effectiveness in our first two games. Once they developed some confidence in themselves and their talents, they practiced harder, and virtually flew up the depth charts. It took game day pressure to find the diamonds in them.

It should be obvious that in large part I agree with your statements in your article. However, my biggest point of contention is your statement: "They all must be given the SAME OPPORTUNITY to try out what they learn in practices in game situations." (Capitals are my own.) Perhaps I am of a different, older time. Although I am not even 27, I remember very clearly a day when my game day playing time was correlated directly with my attitude and effort on the practice field. Although it might not fit the current trend of "everyone plays, everyone wins" and "everyone who shows up gets a trophy" I believe that the biggest motivator to any football player is the depth chart. If a player has the proper respect for his coach, then he will understand the coach's respect for HIM when he is named a starter.

What does it tell the starter, who practiced with bumps and bruises, studied his playback, sweated during conditioning and drills, and worked hard through a week's worth of difficult practices, when he is routinely benched so another player, who jogged during sprints, never opened his playback, and practiced in a lackadaisical fashion, can assume his place on the game field?

Youth sports, especially football, have a powerful ability to create virtues in young men and women. Sports teach teamwork, honor, sportsmanship, devotion to a goal, and selflessness. All of these traits are positive, and all of them are increasingly harder and harder to teach to children in a world where they can simply hit a reset button if the Nintendo game they're playing doesn't go as planned.

Part of being a player is being a teammate, and part of being a teammate is being willing to earn your position on the depth chart. If you haven't earned it, you shouldn't expect it. Part of being a coach is making a commitment to ALL players. My starters know that they start because Coach Wade believes in them, and they have demonstrated the desire to play through hard work and, here's the word again: discipline. The backups know that if they work hard enough then they too will be able to represent their football team with their play on the field. No one on my team ever thinks, "Why practice hard? I'll get to play anyway." Or, "Why practice hard? Coach is only going to take my position away and give it to someone else. This means practicing as hard as you can and earning your rightful place on the playing field.

So having read the above articles you can see that this topic is probably one of the most debated and hottest issues in youth sports. It is usually the issue that surfaces most often every year. Many sports have "starters" who play for extended periods of time (football, soccer, baseball, even basketball). Hockey on the other hand is a quick moving game; there really aren't any starters, shifts typically last 45 seconds to max 90 seconds at the higher levels. At the lower levels, well sometimes it's whenever the whistle blows. But the issue of playing time still exists when it comes to shift rotation and special teams play. LMHF has an "everyone plays" policy at the house league level. House league hockey is recreational participation hockey. Players should not be benched unless it's for disciplinary reasons. That philosophy is extended onto double letter teams as well, especially at the Atom level. Coaches are given some flexibility at the AA & BB levels in Peewee, Bantam and Midget as long as they apply the "reward" system based on merit and not just "skill". There is some merit to allocating playing time based on effort given. What has no merit is the benching of players because they are not as skilled, they constantly make mistakes, he/she may cost us the game. If you are tempted to bench players because they are not ready for that situation, whose fault is that? Who is responsible for preparing the players? To quote Sun Tzu: "If words of command are not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, then the general is to blame." Therefore we, as coaches, must ask ourselves: was the message clear, were the players prepared, have I, as the coach, done everything possible to address the deficiencies of these players? As a veteran coach once told me; when you evaluate your season, you base your success on how much you were able to develop your bottom third of the team, and that applies at all levels. No coach should put players into the game merely to gratify his own ego. Those victories are short-lived. Your challenge is to prepare the players so that they have the skills and the confidence to go out and play. The more you are exposed to these coaching situations the more comfortable you will become. With constant practice and exposure to various playing situations not only will the players

become less nervous, but so will you, the coach. If you have prepared your players properly they will deliver, regardless of their skill set.

Making the Coaching Experience a Better One....

Youth coaches have a difficult job. They are the key decision-makers. They set examples. Players look to them for leadership. The club administrators – and parents -- look to them to make good choices.

As adults we often speak to our young people about making choices— preferably intelligent, positive choices.

That said, coaches make choices, too. They can choose to be the kind of coach that cares only about “winning”, or a coach that has a deeper—and longer-lasting—impact on the young people they coach and the families whose lives they touch.

Here are some tips to help make the coaching experience better for you—and the young people you interact with:

1) Build confidence in your players

Too often young athletes have their confidence shattered by their coach. Ask anyone in sports, including top professional athletes: when you lose your confidence, performance suffers and it becomes a vicious cycle. As a coach, regardless of whether you are soft-spoken, a yeller or somewhere in between, you must show confidence in your athletes – and constantly build their self-confidence. Wouldn't you rather be the one coach the player looks back on and says – “That person really believed in me and made a difference in my life” than the coach who is a negative caricature in the minds of your former players?

2) Identify the real team players on your squad

Coaches so often want to build a team with stars that they neglect to identify the young athletes who will be the glue that keeps a team together, and keeps them successful. There are obviously many attributes of a “team player”, but for starters, look for young people who are good teammates, who support other players, who are unselfish, and treat other players and people with respect. A really good coach would rather ‘lose’ with a bunch of fine young people than ‘win’ with a group of talented prima donnas who care only about themselves and not the team.

3) Communicate regularly -- and honestly

Young players need regular feedback. You should never go weeks or months without providing constructive feedback on their performance. If they are not meeting your expectations, either in terms of performance or attitude, speak with them—privately. That said, the first thing you should do is set mutually understood expectations at the *beginning* of each season. Meet with the player alone to do this (and with their parents, when age appropriate), away from everyone else.

4) Explain clearly what you want and then demonstrate what you want

I often see coaches demand, yell, threaten. Most coaches are not Tony Dungie (coach of the NFL Super Bowl Champion Indianapolis Colts) who rarely, if ever, speaks above his “normal” voice. Parents and players expect --and accept-- some loudness from a coach. A little loudness may even help sometimes, especially on a rink when everyone is wearing a helmet! But be sure to explain clearly what you want to see, then *show what you want*. Young players need to see what you're talking about, so if you can't show/demonstrate what you want, bring in a guest instructor who can.

5) Recognize that every young person/athlete is motivated differently

Not every athlete— or person — responds to the same stimuli. Some athletes are self-driven, some may need a shove in the behind, others need encouragement. Whatever, the key is to find out what is behind every player's mental door. Speak to the player. Get to know them. Find out what motivates them. Find out what they really love about your sport — this will give you a look behind the door. Again if age appropriate, speak with their parents. They may have insight that will help you inspire your young player. The last thing you should want as a youth coach is to act in a manner that will kill the love a player has for "the game".

6) Recognize that you have a potentially huge affect on the young people you coach

Parents clearly have a seminal influence on the lives of their children. Particular teachers can have a major impact. But there's no question youth coaches have a huge affect on many of the young players on their team. What you say, how you say it, how you act and how you treat people does matter -- a lot. Ask yourself: How will I want to be remembered by this group of players, by each individual player, in 20 years?

Be the kind of coach that will make people remember you fondly, as a positive inspiration in their life, as someone who made a real difference, whether they go on in the sporting field or not. Your players will remember you for a long, long time. What do you want their memory of you to be? That doesn't mean you have to be a softie. Tough love can work for some as well.

7) Don't hide your head in the sand. Make yourself aware of personality conflicts on your team, and work to resolve them

Many youth coaches don't want to know if there are conflicts on their young team. Worse, if they do know there are issues, they don't know how to deal with the situation effectively. Just like adults, we can't expect young people, particularly young people competing against one another for playing time and recognition, etc. to always like each other, or to get along. But you can make it a point to hear, watch and see what's going on. And you, as the team leader, can engender a sense of camaraderie, togetherness, and foster the notion of respect for each other on and off the field of play. Insist on it.

8) Keep your players' egos in check

Some coaches may not think that this is an issue in youth sports, but in this day and age, it is. Young people see "the pros" showboating, trash-talking and generally acting in a manner that most parents would not approve of. Even the great Zidane, in some people's minds, may well have set a poor example in this regard in the final of the 2006 World Cup. (Zidane at least was, in his own mind, defending his family's honour when he was involved in the controversial 'head-butting' incident, after an opposing player evidently made several on-field remarks.)

While we all want our kids to have healthy self-esteem and a good sense of self-worth, too much "attitude" can lead to an over-developed sense of self-importance. As coach, you have the opportunity—and the responsibility—to see that your players don't fall into this pattern. If you don't deal with it, you will generally see a negative impact on the players, your team, and your efforts to build a tight-knit group.

9) Listen to your players. Don't assume you have all the answers

We adults often think we have the answers, because we have "life experience". This life experience can lead to wisdom. It can also lead to rigid thinking that hasn't changed in decades. This certainly applies to coaching. Coaches who say, "this is the way it was in my day", or think because they played the game at a high level that they know everything there is to know, may be

doing their players a disservice. The way things were done in “your day” may not have been the best way. Much like parenting, why would we want to repeat the mistakes made by our own parents? In my many years as a minor sports volunteer, I have spoken with many athletes and I often hear of their frustration with coaches who just won’t listen, won’t take input from those who are actually playing the game NOW. Hearing is a sense. Listening is a skill. Develop that skill—especially when it comes to relating to your players.

One other thing on this subject: As I mentioned earlier, take the time to find out what each player really loves about the sport. Sometimes a coach will be with a young person for an entire season and will never bother to find out that the player loves a certain aspect of the sport. Find out. Then build on that to help them become an even better all-around player.

10) Model real leadership. If you talk about leadership but don’t live it, your players will tune you out.

Leadership is easy to talk – and write about— and much harder to show. But as a youth sports coach, you have a wonderful opportunity to model positive leadership. How you speak with your players, the way you instruct, how you handle situations when players make mistakes and how you communicate with players on a daily basis are all vitally important examples of your leadership style. You are showing by your own actual behavioral example what you believe is the “right” way for an adult in a position of authority to handle themselves. You should always have handy a mental checklist, a self-monitoring system that makes you ask yourself, “will I feel badly tomorrow about what I am about to say or do right now?”

We all make mistakes, and if you make one, be strong enough to acknowledge that you let a player down and then apologize to them. The willingness to do that will set a tremendous example as well.

11) Be consistent in your discipline and expectations, regardless of whether it’s your “stars” or those who play less often

Young people generally recognize pretty quickly when a coach says one thing, then does something different. While you should aim to get to know all of your players as individuals, and know what motivates them and react accordingly, you should establish firm team expectations – and stick with them. Suppose “star” players miss practice regularly, or don’t work hard in drills, or put down their teammates (or act out in games against opponents or referees). Do you ignore this behavior because you “need” that player to “win”? The players should know what your rules, guidelines and expectations are, and realize there will be consequences— regardless of who breaks the rules.

12) The Golden Rule: Monitor how your players treat one another

For some coaches, this notion is somehow totally unimportant. It should be important to you. If you have certain players putting down others on a young team, it’s toxic and spreads. Don’t be lulled into thinking it doesn’t matter. It does. The world is still full of “Eddie Haskell” (a famous teenage character from the classic ‘Leave It To Beaver’ television program) types— kids who are nice to the coach or certain adults, but are jerks to teammates or others they don’t like.

If you see inappropriate behavior of any kind, deal with it firmly. The old adage “boys will be boys” doesn’t cut it—in male or female youth sports. Talk to the instigator/s privately and make it clear you will not tolerate that behavior on your team, full stop.

13) **Be respectful of parents**

Youth coaches (sometimes understandably) tend to look at parents as necessary evils. We parents can be a pain, no question. Coaches don't want to "deal" with parents, and delegate an assistant coach or team manager to handle all interpersonal situations. You may be saying to yourself, "Hey, I'm a volunteer, I already give up lots of my time" which is a fair point if you don't have a son or daughter on your team. But parents do deserve to know how their son or daughter is doing, why they are playing a lot or a little, and if there are things they could be doing to make the overall experience for their child a better one. Ideally, set aside some time every so often to make yourself available either by phone or in person in order to discuss any issues parents may have.

14) **Ask yourself: Are you being the adult in the relationship with your player/players?**

In my advisory work with young athletes, I sometimes see situations where it strikes me that the player has to assume the role of the adult in the coach-player relationship. The coach doesn't have a true open door policy, may be a 'talker' but not an effective communicator, may be a demotivator, etc. When issues arise, there is silence, not an effort to resolve things and so feelings fester and simmer. This forces the young person to plan a strategy to deal effectively with the situation. As the coach, you be the adult. You are the adult, so accept the responsibility. Set a high standard in terms of your performance and behavior expectations of the young athletes (but understand they are young and will make mistakes), and in return do the same to and for yourself.

15) **Recognize that every player on your team must not only feel they are an important part of your team/success, they must know it. That comes from you.**

I quite often will hear a professional coach say things such as, "As a coach, I try to make everyone on the team feel important". Well, that's all very nice. All your players should *feel* important. But your job is not to make them feel important, it is to make them know and fully understand that they really *are* important. In any team sport, not even the greatest players of their generation— Bobby Orr, Wayne Gretzky, Jim Brown, Michael Jordan. Pele —could win a game, much less a championship, on their own. Every player on their squad likely contributed something significant at some point that changed the outcome of a particular game or season. Your players, especially the ones who perhaps are not as skilled as the others, need to know clearly they are an invaluable part of any success your team has. And you need to make this understood to all your players, especially those who think they are the straw that stirs the drink.

16) **Are there consequences to your expectations or are they just idle threats?**

In short, we don't need to be a psychologist to understand that if your leadership, rules and expectations are to have any impact, you must be consistent not only in outlining but also in acting upon your expectations. It is imperative that you demonstrate that there are clear consequences. Anything short of real consequences and these smart young people will call your bluff and tune you out—to your face, or behind your back.

17) **If you cannot provide certain expertise find it for your team.**

In this day and age, coaches should be humble enough to recognize they don't know everything. Fitness and nutrition are important, so if this is not an area you have knowledge about, bring in people who do to share information with your athletes. As a high-level coach, if you have no legitimate expertise as a keeper/goalie coach, for example, seek out someone who can provide it. Misinformation or poor instruction is probably worse in these instances than no information or instruction at all.

Positive Coaching

Bottom Line - quit looking for the negative and start looking for the positive in your players. Start writing it down and talking to each player about the positive area of their game. When players realize that you are going to talk about positive things that they have done they will work even hard so that you will have more positive things to say about them.

Write the name of each player on a piece of paper. If there is a specific action you want to look for with that player (for example, hustling back on defense, blocking out for rebounds, stayed in the batters box, didn't watch third stike go by) write it next to the players name. Look for the positive things players do. Whenever you see one, jot a note under the player's name. (Over time you'll develop your own shorthand. The key is to write enough so you'll remember it when you get to step #5 below.)

Remember to look for the team-building things that players do to encourage each other as well as their physical actions. Make sure you have about the same number of comments (3-5 is good) for each player. You may have to look hard with some players. And you may have to limit the number of comments for the advanced players. Be disciplined: at the end of the game you should have 3-5 items for each player. Be honest. Don't be tempted to make something up or write something that isn't true about any player. This is the hard part - you have to find something positive about each player. It may be a small thing, but you can find it if you look hard enough. At your next practice, begin with a quick team meeting in which you review your positive charting with your team. Take each player in turn and share with the group the positives. This should take no more than 30 seconds or so per player. Enjoy the positive energy of your players during practice.

Winners make the choice:

- To get something out of all situations, rather than complain about them.
- To hustle, rather than dog it.
- To be prepared, rather than just show up.
- To be consistent, rather than occasional.
- To be early, rather than just on time or late.
- To want to learn, rather than want to explain or excuse.
- To do more, rather than just enough or less.
- To think about solutions, rather than worry about problems.
- To share with and help others, rather than be selfish.
- To accept adversity as part of the game and life, rather than seek sympathy.
- To think and act positively, rather than negatively.
- To be responsible for more than their position or job, rather than only worry about their position or job.
- To go through a problem, rather than around it.
- To make a commitment, rather than a promise
- To explain, rather than explain away.

To think - I can, I want to, I will, we will, rather than I can't, I have to, I hope, I want to avoid failure.

Improving Your Players Hockey Experience

Sport Psychology and the Young Athlete

Gordon A. Bloom, Ph.D.

Dept. of Kinesiology & Physical Education
McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
gordon.bloom@mcgill.ca

Most people associate sport psychology with elite athletes and teams. However, a great deal of research has looked at the psychological issues in children's sport participation. This article will examine various aspects associated with the psychology of the young athlete.

The Alarming Statistics

Recent data suggests that approximately 47 million children under the age of 18 years are involved in North American physical activity programs. Most children participate intensively in sport, averaging 11 hours weekly for an 18-week season. Sport participation peaks near the age of 12, then is followed by a rapid decline for most youngsters. 35% is the average dropout rate for children in each year. These findings are critical since research in psychology has found that a crucial time for the development of children's social skills and self-esteem occurs between the ages of 10-13. Given this information, it can be concluded that youth sport experiences can have a lasting effect on the psychological development of its participants.

The Reasons

According to most experts, the following factors are most likely to affect the continuation of sport experiences for children:

- 1) Having fun
- 2) Skill improvement
- 3) Fitness benefits
- 4) Atmosphere surrounding the team
- 5) Coach satisfaction
- 6) Parental satisfaction.

I will focus on the first factor. I am always reminding youth sport coaches that winning or losing games is far less important than ensuring that young athletes are having fun. I tell youth sport coaches that their success rate can be measured by how many children want to return the following year. Youth sport should not be designed to produce the next Wayne Gretzky, Alex Rodriguez, or Steve Nash. Rather, it should be a time where children are improving their physical, social, and cognitive skills. One of the main reasons why children drop out of sport is their perceptions of low athletic ability. Thus, youth sport coaches should focus a great deal of their efforts on enhancing children's perceived abilities. **Thus, not playing a child an equal amount of time may win you a game, but it may also increase the likelihood that the child who doesn't play in that game, doesn't play at all next year.** Because of the important role that coaches' can

play in a child's life, I will list a few tips for coaching young athletes, as outlined by experts Frank Smoll, Ron Smith, and Maureen Weiss.

Coaching Tips for Improving Youth Sport Experiences

1. Reward Effort as Much as Outcome: It must be remembered that those children who are the "stars" of their young teams often are better skilled because they have had more practice time than others, either at home or at hockey schools. Thus, it is up to coaches to try and raise the skill levels of the athletes who don't have the extra practice time. One method is to focus on the level of effort exhibited by players rather than their abilities or outcome.
2. Catch Kids Doing Something Right When Praising: Along the same line as point #1, it is important that coaches praise at the right time. Children are smart and will understand if you are not praising correctly. Good coaches pay attention to detail and know when to praise.
3. Reward Correct Technique, Not Just Outcome: Coaches (and parents) should not only focus on the outcome, instead the process of how it was done. In other words, be cautious about praising a child for making a correct pass if it was done accidentally or incorrectly. On the other hand, remember to praise the child who attempted the pass and/or who exhibited the proper technique, even if the pass was intercepted.
4. Create an Environment that Reduces the Fear of Trying New Skills: One of my greatest fears is a young coach who focuses on winning games by teaching his/her hockey player's strategies such as the "neutral zone trap" or "dump and chase", instead of skills like passing, skating, and stickhandling. Children should be encouraged to develop and refine their hockey skills and not be worried about making a mistake. As a coach, or parent, allow your child to develop his/her skills and to have fun doing so.
5. Be Enthusiastic! Children love it when their coaches are happy, excited, and involved in their activities.
6. Modify Skills and Activities: Make sure that all of the rules, games, and equipment are age specific. In other words, 6/7 year old hockey players should not play games on an entire ice surface. This will most likely lead to the best players holding the puck 85% of the time. Play games on a half ice surface so that all players can be involved in the game. Also, use lighter pucks for younger children.
7. Maximum Participation During Practices: Design practice sessions so that all children are active and moving. Kids should not be waiting in line. Also, they should never be focusing on only one child. Keep them active and focusing on their own skill development.

Conclusion

The children are our future. With the many environmental changes that are happening in today's society (i.e., reliance on computers over physical activity, increase of crime and violence, more two parent income families, fewer parks and rinks, etc), it is not surprising that our youth are more obese and less active than their predecessors. There are many implications of this fact, not the least of which is the detrimental lifelong effects on the personality and psychosocial development of young children. Thus, parents, sport administrators, and more importantly coaches, need to make youth hockey as fun and positive as it can be. This article has tried to list a few tips for coaches in order to make youth hockey the best experience possible for ALL of its participants.