

WYAL Coaches Training Certification Program

“Professional coaches measure success in rings. High school coaches measure success in titles. Youth coaches measure success in smiles.”



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Skills

Throwing Drills

Snap Drill: Athlete kneels down on his/her arm side knee with the opposite foot flat on the ground and the knee bent at a 90-degree angle.

Main concern: Elbow is at shoulder height and the athlete only uses the elbow and wrist. Make sure the athlete has the correct grip and that they get a lot of spin on the ball.

Short Lever: Kneeling down the athlete reaches up toward the sky with knuckles behind the ball and the lead arm (the glove hand) pointing directly toward their partner on a level plain with the shoulders. Second, the athlete drops their hand behind their head without dropping their elbow. Third, the athlete throws the ball to his/her partner and follows through across the body to the other hip.

Cue Words: Sky-Scratch-Throw

Main concern: Athlete does not drop the elbow going from sky position to scratch position.

Long Lever: Kneeling down the athlete reaches back with knuckles on top of the ball, elbow slightly bent and glove extended out toward the target with the thumb down. In this position the athlete uses their shoulder joint to get to the sky position for the short lever mechanics.

Main concern: Elbow bent, knuckles on top of the ball, and uses the shoulder joint to get to “Sky” position.

Open-Close-Throw: Athlete stands up and faces their partner. Next, the athlete steps with the arm side foot, aligning the inside part of the ankle facing his/her partner. Last, step with the other foot toward the target, and throw the target and the ball with the arm side foot going up in the air.

Main concern: Step with the ankle facing the target or the partner and the arm side foot goes to the sky.

Fielding Mechanics

Outfield Mechanics

1. Approach (tracks the ball on his/her toes, drifts, runs to a spot / sets up)
2. Catch (momentum back, momentum forward, two hands when appropriate)
3. Throw (crow hop, flat feet)

Infield Mechanics

1. Approach (stays back, charges, smooth, needs more)
2. Hands (stabs, brick, closes the door)
3. Throw (steps through, steps behind)

Throwing Mechanics

1. Long Lever (reaches back with knuckles on top)
2. Short lever (good wrist snap)
3. Sling (uses the shoulder to throw the ball)
4. Side arm (no strength)
5. Arm strength (decent mechanics, great mechanics)

Hitting Mechanics

Head Mechanics

1. Tracks the ball to the bat (one or two eyes)
2. Pulls off
3. Tilted head
4. Level eyes

Hip Mechanics

1. Closes slightly
2. Opens early
3. Drifts
4. Pivot back foot

Swing Mechanics

1. Long (reaches back around the head)
2. Hitch (bounces the bat up and down before swing)
3. Casts out (takes the bat away from the body)
4. Drifts (starts hands before front foot is down)
5. Stays short on the ball
6. Has good power
7. Lacking power
8. Contact hitter
9. Knuckles line up

Pitching Mechanics

Wind up / Approach

1. Stance for taking the sign from the catcher
2. Feet apart, feet together
3. Arch of foot is on edge of rubber
4. Torso is up, leaning over
5. Knees are slightly bent, locked
6. Glove face the pitcher about chin height, faces third base

Release

1. Long lever (reaches back with knuckles on top)
2. Short lever (good wrist snap)

3. Sling (uses the shoulder to throw the ball)
4. Side arm (no strength)
5. Arm strength (decent mechanics, great mechanics)
6. Opens hips early and falls off to the opposite side
7. Momentum towards home plate
8. Throws around front leg
9. Has good balance

Stretch Mechanics

1. Taking the sign
2. Set position
3. Check the runner
4. Slide stop

Practice Organization

Philosophy

1. Fun
2. Skills
3. Positive experience
 - a. “Something to glow on and something to grow on”
4. “Winning isn’t as crucial as doing everything possible in the effort to win”
 - a. Never be outworked

Guidelines

1. Maximum participation
2. Efficient use of time
3. Maximum use of facilities and coaches
4. Variation – variety spices up practice
5. Adjust to the weather
 - a. Throw early on cold days
 - b. Wet weather practices
6. Condition during practice
7. Competition – near the end of practice
 - a. 10 “Chase the rabbit”
 - b. Bunting accuracy
 - c. Mike Allen drill
8. Learning principles
 - a. Why?
 - b. Speed
 - c. Breakdown
 - d. Review
 - e. Drill – repetition is the mother of learning
 - f. 3 D’s – describe, demonstrate, drill
9. Role model
 - a. Punctual
 - b. Dress
 - c. Language
 - d. Respect – umpire, opponents, players

Practice Schedule

1. Master plan
2. Written schedule
 - a. Go over with assistants
 - b. Go over with players
 - c. Stick to it
 - d. Critique and adjust for next practice
 - e. Hour spent planning may be most important hour
 - f. Red ink schedules and save

Practice Routine – Continuity

1. Stretch and run
2. Throwing drills
 - a. By positions
 - b. Long throws
 - c. Same direction
3. Lead pass drill
4. Pepper
5. Station drill
6. Small group drills
7. Batting practice
 - a. Several stations – rotate on whistle
 - b. Combine base running and defense
8. Team situations – offense and defense
9. Extra conditioning
10. Fireside chat

Variation in BP – Stations

1. Ties
2. Tees
3. Toss drills
4. Situation – hitting
 - a. Two strikes
 - b. Zone hitting (3-1 & 2-0)
 - c. Down angle

Game Situation and Base Running

1. Basic rules
 - a. Never make the first or third out at 3B. Why? Explain.
 - b. Know when to gamble
 - c. Make the “banana route” – Why?
2. R2 – always go on the ball to right side. Why?
3. Runners – fungo or hit off tee or shortened batting practice

Safety

Playing it Safe on the Baseball Field

http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/fact/thr_report.cfm?Thread_ID=99&topcategory=Sports%20%2F%20Exercise

Baseball is one of our country's most popular recreational sports with more than 40 million Americans participating in softball and baseball leagues.

Where are most of the injuries occurring in baseball? Here are some areas that coaches, parents and kids need to know about.

Excessive pitching

Many injuries occur from excessive pitching, and can be prevented if players and coaches follow these safety guidelines.

To decrease shoulder and elbow problems from excessive pitching:

- Follow the guidelines about the number of innings pitched as specified by the individual's baseball league (a maximum of four to 10 innings a week) not by the number of teams played on.
- While there is no concrete guideline for the number of pitches allowed, a reasonable approach is to count the number of pitches thrown and use 80 to 100 pitches as a maximum in a game, and 30 to 40 pitches in a practice.
- Any persistent pain should disqualify a child from playing until pain subsides.

Breakaway bases

Many injuries to players occur while sliding into bases, these mishaps and their resulting costs (\$2 billion in medical costs) could be significantly lowered by installing breakaway bases on playing fields.

To prevent sliding injuries, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (www.aaos.org) urges all communities to install breakaway bases in their playing fields. A breakaway base is snapped onto grommets attached to an anchored rubber mat which hold it in place during normal play. When a runner slides into the base, it can be dislodged to avoid direct contact and injury. (During normal base running, the breakaway base is stable and will not detach.)

A traditional stationary base, bolted to a metal post and sunk into the ground, becomes a rigid obstacle for an athlete to encounter while sliding and often results in injury.

Protective gear

Protective equipment is one of the most important factors in minimizing the risk of injury in baseball. Here are some safety tips to prevent injuries:

- Remember your equipment must fit properly and be worn correctly.
- Wear a batting helmet at the plate, when waiting a turn at bat, and when running bases.

- Facial protection devices that are attached to batting helmets are available in some youth leagues. These devices can help reduce the risk of a serious facial injury if hit by a ball.
- The catcher must always use a catcher's mitt. If you play another position, ask your coach about specific size requirements for your mitt.
- Catchers should always wear a helmet, face mask, throat guard, long-model chest protector, protective supporter, and shin guards.
- Most youth leagues prohibit the use of shoes with steel spikes. Instead, wear molded, cleated baseball shoes.
- Inspect the playing field for holes, glass, and other debris.

For more information on “Prevent Injuries America!®,” call the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons' public service telephone number 1-800-824-BONES (2663).

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Tips To Prevent Baseball Injuries

Each year, almost 500,000 baseball-related injuries are treated in hospitals, doctors' offices, clinics, ambulatory surgery centers and hospital emergency rooms.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons offers the following tips to prevent baseball injuries:

- Always take time to warm up and stretch. Research studies have shown that cold muscles are more prone to injury. Warm up with jumping jacks, stationary cycling or running or walking in place for 3 to 5 minutes. Then slowly and gently stretch, holding each stretch for 30 seconds.
- Your equipment should fit properly and be worn correctly.
- Wear a batting helmet at the plate, when waiting a turn at bat, and when running bases.
- Facial protection devices that are attached to batting helmets are available in some leagues. These devices can help reduce the risk of a serious facial injury if you get hit by a ball.
- Follow the guidelines about the number of innings pitched as specified by your baseball league (usually four to 10 innings a week) not by the number of teams played on.
- While there is no concrete guideline for the number of pitches allowed, a reasonable approach is to count the number of pitches thrown and use 80 to 100 pitches as a maximum in a game, and 30 to 40 pitches in a practice.
- Wear the appropriate mitt for your position. Catchers should always use a catcher's mitt.
- Catchers should always wear a helmet, face mask, throat guard, long-model chest protector, protective supporter, and shin guards.
- Wear molded, cleated baseball shoes that fit properly.
- Inspect the playing field for holes, glass, and other debris.
- Be knowledgeable about first aid and be able to administer it for minor injuries, such as facial cuts, bruises, or minor tendonitis, strains, or sprains.
- Be prepared for emergency situations and have a plan to reach medical personnel to treat injuries such as concussions, dislocations, elbow contusions, wrist or finger sprains, and fractures.

For more information on “Prevent Injuries America!®,” call the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons' public service telephone number 1-800-824-BONES (2663).

February 2002

Source: U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's 1999 NEISS data and estimates, based on injuries treated in hospitals, doctors' offices, ambulatory care facilities, clinics and hospital emergency rooms.

Elbow Injuries in Young Baseball Players

http://www.physsportsmed.com/issues/1999/06_99/whiteside.htm

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In Brief: The demands that throwing places on the vulnerable immature elbow frequently produce multiple injuries. Significant clues in the history include persistent medial elbow soreness, stiffness, and discomfort that lead to poor performance. Diagnosis involves identifying the injury sites by palpation and x-rays that pinpoint growth-plate separation or osteochondral changes. Non-operative treatment, which can proceed if growth-plate separation at the medial apophysis is less than 3 mm, involves stretching, strengthening, sport-specific activities, and interval throwing. Prevention includes conditioning, limiting the number of pitches, and using age guidelines for learning new pitches.

Baseball is one of the most popular sports for children, but repeated throwing, especially pitching, in skeletally immature athletes can produce elbow injuries that threaten the growth plate. Physicians who care for youth league pitchers and their teammates can expect to be kept busy treating these injuries; a recent survey found an injury incidence of 40.1% in 172 9- to 12-year-old pitchers who were followed for 1 year (1). Physicians who understand the injury mechanics and pathologic consequences are better equipped to help the young athlete prevent injuries, advise parents about pitching training for children, and identify the early signs of injury.

Injury Mechanisms

The elbows of skeletally immature patients have secondary ossification centers at the distal humerus, radial head, and olecranon. When subjected to repetitive stress, such as frequent overhand throwing, the growth plates (physes) of these unfused centers are more vulnerable to injury than are the adjacent muscle-tendon units.

Overhand throwing subjects the elbow to forces of tension, compression, shear, and torsion (figure 1). The acceleration phase of pitching or throwing hard with a flexed elbow places a valgus stress on the medial ligamentous support structures and the ulnar nerve and compresses the lateral osseous anatomy. Posteriorly, valgus torque causes the medial part of the olecranon to impinge against the medial olecranon fossa. Anteriorly, the distal bicipital tendon stretches eccentrically when the forearm extends after ball release.

Figure 1: © 1999. Terry Boles

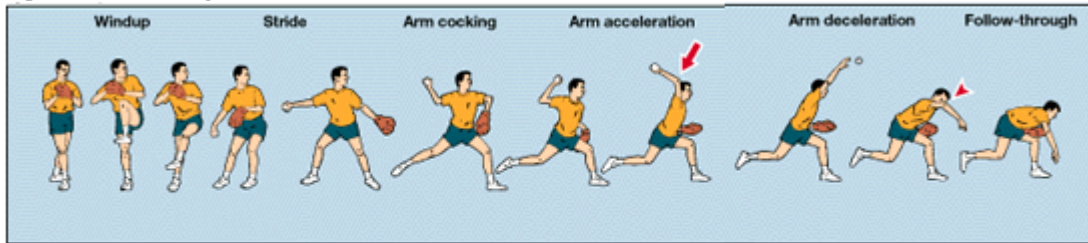


Figure 1. Delivery stages in baseball pitching include windup, stride, arm cocking, arm acceleration, arm deceleration, and follow-through. (The model wears shorts to better demonstrate leg position.) The acceleration phase (arrow) in hard throwing with a flexed elbow places valgus stress on the medial ligamentous support structures and the ulnar nerve, compressing the lateral osseous anatomy. Posteriorly, valgus torque causes the medial olecranon to impinge against the medial olecranon fossa. Forearm extension after ball release (arrowhead) eccentrically stretches the distal bicipital tendon.

The primary ligamentous stabilizer of the elbow in a thrower of any age is the anterior bundle of the ulnar collateral ligament (UCL) (figure 2) (2). The UCL in skeletally immature athletes is attached proximally to the extra-articular, unfused medial humeral apophysis and distally to the sublime (elevated spot) tubercle of the ulna. Direct trauma or a posterior elbow dislocation infrequently avulses the medial humeral apophysis. More typically, chronic, sub-clinical valgus distraction partially separates the medial apophysis from the humerus (Salter-Harris type 1 fracture). With repetitive valgus stress, a single hard throw may partially or completely avulse the medial apophysis from the epicondyle. In this case, the UCL remains intact, but it is incapable of providing medial support. When the medial apophysis is solidly fused, a single hard throw may precipitate flexor/pronator muscle strain and, with similar repetition, UCL pathology.

Figure 2: Mary Albury-Noyes

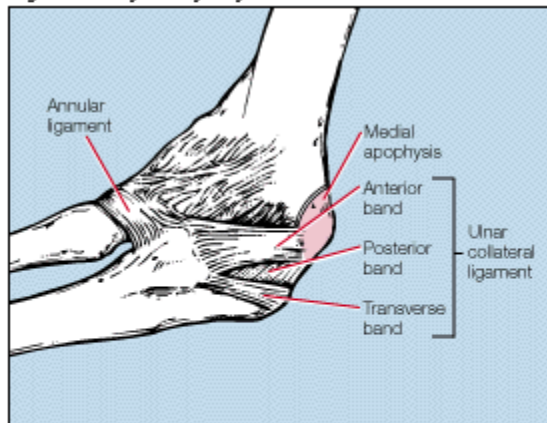


Figure 2. The primary ligamentous stabilizer of the elbow in any age thrower is the anterior band of the ulnar collateral ligament (UCL). Chronic valgus distraction during pitching and throwing can partially separate the medial apophysis from the humerus (double line). If the medial apophysis avulses from the epicondyle, the UCL remains intact but cannot provide medial support.

In 1889 König (3) recognized a lesion of the sub-chondral bone in the capitellum and radial head and named it osteochondritis dissecans. A comparable lesion in 7- to 11-year-olds was described by Panner (4) in 1924 as osteochondrosis of the capitellum. The distinctive feature of Panner's osteochondrosis is that stopping the offending activity, such as pitching and hard throwing, allows the lesion to heal without loose-body formation.

In 1960 Brogdon and Crow (5) observed that in young pitchers, repetitive valgus microtrauma produced medial apophysitis; they labeled the condition “Little Leaguer's elbow.” (To avoid negative connotations, Little League Baseball, Inc, has requested that the term “Little Leaguer's elbow” not be used in this article. Consequently, “elbow injuries in the physically immature” is substituted.) Other authors have expanded this primary entity to include (table 1):

- partial or complete avulsion of the medial apophysis,
- articular cartilage and sub-chondral bone changes in the lateral capitellum and radial head (i.e., osteochondritis dissecans),
- avulsion of the posterior olecranon epiphysis from valgus extension overload,
- stress fracture of the proximal ulna, and
- ulnar nerve neuritis medially.

Table 1. Elbow Injuries in Young Throwing Athletes

Anterior Compartment

Anterior capsular stretching
Bicipital tendonitis
Biceps and/or brachialis muscle weakness
Osteochondritis dissecans

Lateral Compartment

Extensor and/or supinator muscle strain
Lateral apophysitis
Anconeus muscle strain
Suprachondral fracture

Posterior Compartment

Olecranon tip impingement
Olecranon apophysitis
Triceps tendonitis

Medial Compartment

Ulnar collateral ligament sprain
Flexor and/or pronator muscle strain
Medial apophysitis
Partial or complete avulsion of the epiphysis
Ulnar nerve neuritis

Typically, these repetitive excessive forces involve the hypertrophic zone of the growth plate, which is particularly vulnerable during peak growth velocity—ages 10 to 12 for girls and ages 13 to 15 for boys.

In 1968 Slocum (6) was the first to note that in young pitchers, compression, rotational shear, and extension forces produce articular cartilage and sub-chondral bony lesions in

the capitellum and radial head. (See "[Osteochondritis Dissecans of the Elbow: Diagnosis, Treatment, and Prevention](#)," February, page 75.) These lateral osteocartilaginous lesions may be augmented by inherent or acquired elbow laxity, relatively small surface compression areas, or vascular insufficiency. The lesion in the capitellum resembles avascular necrosis.

Nerve entrapment injuries also can occur in throwers. The ulnar nerve can be injured from stretching in the groove, the median nerve from volar forearm compression forces, the radial nerve from supination, and the musculocutaneous nerve from pronation and extension.

Medial elbow pathology in young baseball players is often attributed to overuse, which implies that the actions exceeded the expected volume. However, the term "overuse," used in this way, implies that the solution to youthful pitching injuries is simply for players to pitch and throw less. This is an oversimplification. Prevention and treatment of these injuries must take into account not only the number of pitches or throws and the frequency of play, but also velocity, throwing mechanics, and the player's age.

Typical History

A carefully directed history is the essential prerequisite and complement to a thorough physical examination. Usually, young players report that the medial elbow and proximal forearm began to hurt a few days either after repeated throwing to first base from third or shortstop or after pitching. Initially, they recount that the discomfort abated with rest but returned during throwing. Unlike skeletally mature athletes, younger players often do not recall a single pitch that caused the pain. Rather, medial symptoms occurred after multiple hard throws or pitches over a short time. These young athletes are often the best "skill" athletes on the team, and, when not pitching, they usually play third base or shortstop. They may say that hurried throws from third to first base produced shoulder or elbow symptoms that were not evident during pitching.

Young throwers may not recognize or understand the importance of reporting minimal arm symptoms early. They may consider arm fatigue, which is the first indicator of impending injury, normal after pitching a few innings and then playing third base. Local soreness on the palmar surface of the proximal forearm soon follows arm fatigue. Some arm soreness may not be unusual after playing, but more severe pain that persists the next day is pathologic. When expected to start the next day at third base, for example, players are conscious of elbow stiffness and soreness and have trouble "getting loose." Also, athletes may report that their throwing was somewhat errant and produced even more symptoms.

Patients seek medical help when they realize that medial elbow pain impairs throwing and batting performance. Young ball players, compared with older players, often do not report prodromal symptoms unless specifically quizzed. Coaches and parents can help prevent more serious injuries by investigating when players exhibit abnormal mannerisms while fielding, throwing, or batting.

Physical and Radiographic Examinations

In classic elbow injuries in young baseball players, clinical findings reflect defects in the interval between the distal humerus and the medial apophysis. Medial tenderness is often

evident when the UCL is placed in a valgus stretch. Palpation of the flexor-pronator muscle mass on the volar aspect of the proximal forearm may produce diffuse medial pain or discomfort because the musculature is often strained when it acts as a secondary support to an injured, failing UCL. In this situation, the neurovascular exams of the elbow, shoulder, forearm, wrist, and hand are usually normal. Other physical exam findings may include minimal swelling of the forearm and pain with resisted pronation.

Anteroposterior, lateral, and right and left oblique x-rays are needed to confirm the diagnosis and extent of osseous injury. The degree of medial apophyseal separation from the distal humerus can be measured by comparing the x-rays of the injured limb with those of the asymptomatic side. X-rays can reveal changes in the lateral capitellum and radial head and avulsion of the olecranon, and they can document ulnar stress fracture and physeal involvement.

Treatment and Rehabilitation

Regardless of pathology, the clinical diagnosis of injury to the physically immature athlete's elbow and its delayed recovery portend a considerable loss of playing time. Players who have separation of the medial apophysis should not pitch the rest of the season but may play first base or another throwing position later in the season.

Non-surgical treatment involves immediately stopping play, initiating anti-inflammatory medication, and beginning structured rehabilitation to ensure full recovery. Icing of the medial elbow should begin immediately and should be done for about 15 minutes three or four times each day. Electrical stimulation can be ordered at first to relieve pain, and later to avoid muscle contraction. In the rehabilitation program, patients progressively stretch the involved area through its full range of motion three times a day to regain full motion while protecting the primary injury site (7).

If conservative treatment fails, surgical intervention usually involves pinning the medial apophysis if separation is greater than 3 mm and wiring if avulsion of the triceps-olecranon complex is significant.

The rehabilitation program is individualized, but athletes who have significant UCL sprains should not play or bat for 6 to 8 weeks, during which the patient undergoes daily rehabilitation activities. Trainers can help determine a player's progression during rehabilitation. Patients begin strengthening with light weights, then progress to isometric and isotonic exercises. Curls and extension exercises are performed for biceps and triceps muscles, pronation and supination exercises for forearm muscles. (Shoulder strengthening exercises should also be included.) Once full pain-free range of motion is established and strength has returned to pre-injury levels, sport-specific exercises are started.

One of the most useful exercises for pitchers is an interval throwing program that initially utilizes the long overhand toss (8). The toss distance is decreased by increments as the velocity of the throw is increased. When players are comfortable throwing 45 feet at 50% velocity, they advance to throwing in the bullpen, then off the mound at full effort. A similar program, minus the pitching element, is used for other throwers. Physicians base the return-to-play decision on the physical therapist's report that the young athlete has established good control and is pain-free at full velocity. Follow-up radiographic studies

can be used to guide the return-to-play decision when treatment is conservative. If the medial apophysis is off 1 to 2 mm, repeat x-rays will remain the same until physes close. Radiographs are always used for follow-up after surgery.

The likelihood of injury recurrence is diminished by obtaining full range of motion and strength and then progressing in a graded, sport-specific fashion while maintaining rehabilitation protocols.

Prevention Measures

Prevention is the responsibility of all who are concerned with youth baseball, although it has been the subject of little clinical research. Several important factors contribute to the youthful pitcher's ability to perform well and remain injury free. Initially, the athlete needs to be healthy and eager to participate. Daily stretching and conditioning are needed to ensure athletic fitness (9). Distance running (aerobic) and sprint work (anaerobic) should be included. It is crucial that young players undertake a strength training program designed for their age and ability before beginning a formal throwing program. These conditioning activities should be done in moderation, tinged with an element of fun, and in harmony with the guidance of parents, but not coerced.

Coaches of youth baseball should not only know the fundamentals of the game, but also teach the proper mechanics of pitching and throwing. Learning the correct technique as a youth can help prevent injuries throughout a player's career (10). Kinematic studies reveal that proper ball delivery varies little at different competition levels (11). There are significant differences, however, in shoulder and elbow kinetics at the higher levels of competition, even when scaled by height and weight (11). Changes in kinetics may increase the risk of injury as the pitcher progresses to higher competition levels (12).

Youth league regulations limit the innings pitched per week to reduce the risk of injury. Because pitch volume is important, it might be more appropriate for leagues to limit the number of pitches per outing, which could be enforced by the coaching staff (11). In the absence of league-imposed limits, parents should ensure that young players are not required to throw excessively. Physicians can educate parents about how much pitching and what kinds of pitches are safe for young players. (See "Pitching Safety for Kids: What to Tell Parents," below.)

The coaching staff, in important but less obvious preventive measures, should instill discipline, teamwork, sportsmanship, and the desire to "do your best" in young players. Above all, coaches should teach young people to have fun safely.

A Call for Adult Advocacy

Youth baseball is not an innocuous, injury-free sport. Pitchers, third basemen, and shortstops who throw hard subject their elbows to high valgus torques. Repetitive torque may considerably stress unfused physes, especially those centered on the medial humeral epiphysis, which produce clinical symptoms. Early symptoms may not be recognized as pathologic until osseous or ligamentous insults occur that require prolonged rehabilitation or surgical intervention. It behooves all who are involved in youth baseball—national committees, league personnel, parents, coaches, physicians, and researchers—to work together to learn more about the mechanism of injuries, prevention, and warning signs.

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Pitching Safety for Kids: What to Tell Parents

Sports medicine professionals can help prevent injuries in youth baseball by raising the awareness of coaches and parents about guidelines for safe participation. Physicians should be able to provide general answers to the following questions that parents commonly have:

- *How soon can my child begin pitching?*
Most children can safely begin to graduate from throwing to pitching at age 8.
- *How many pitches per day are safe?*
For an 8-year-old, a maximum of about 50 pitches per game followed by 2 days of rest (table A: not shown) is a good guideline. However, that number does not take into account hard throwing with friends or parents.

- *When can he or she learn to throw a curve ?*
Throwing a curveball increases the risk of injury because forceful supination and ulnar deviation places more medial stress on the forearm. Safe mechanics for throwing the curveball are difficult to master before the age of 13 or 14 (table A: not shown). Anecdotally, a more valuable pitch to learn early may be the change-up, which is thrown with essentially the same mechanics as a fastball.
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The Best Armor Against Kids' Sports Injuries Is An Informed Parent

by Mickey Rathbun

Ten-year-old Sallie is the fastest runner on her Little League team. But while sliding into second base one day, she catches her foot on the base and her look of excitement turns to one of agony. She has sprained her ankle so severely that she can't play the rest of the season.

Unfortunately, Sallie isn't alone. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, nearly 1.3 million children age 14 and under were treated for sports-related injuries in hospital emergency rooms in 1996. Maybe your child was one of those kids or will be this year.

There is no such thing as an injury-free sport. But common injuries can be prevented. For example, if Sallie's ball field had been equipped with breakaway bases, there's a good chance she would not have sprained her ankle.

Here are some safety tips from sports-medicine experts that can help keep your young athlete off the injured list.

THE FIRST STEP: CONDITIONING

Get your child a sports physical exam. Before your child starts an athletic program, she should have a sports physical one that includes testing for strength, flexibility, and endurance. Have your family doctor check your child's overall health for conditions that might affect her ability to play sports. Discuss previous injuries. Go over your family medical history especially any record of heart attacks in men under 50. That can help the doctor spot potential heart problems, which are rare but can be fatal.

Make sure your child is properly conditioned before the program begins. Dr. Eric Small, director of the Sports Medicine Center for Young Athletes at Blythedale Children's Hospital, in Valhalla, N.Y., says conditioning-related injuries occur most often at the beginning of a season, when kids are more likely to be out of shape. A month before the season begins, kids should run or get some kind of general physical activity once or twice a week. They should work up to three or four times a week by the time team workouts start.

Know your child's nonverbal signals. Youngsters are notoriously uncommunicative about their bodies, so you need to observe your kids closely. While a player might be too distracted during a game to feel his pain, parents and coaches should notice whether he is favoring a leg or has residual soreness after the game. Some athletes downplay injuries to avoid being benched.

COACHING FOR SAFETY

Check that your child's sports program includes proper skills instruction. Of the five major conditioning components endurance, strength, flexibility, speed, and skill is the most directly related to avoiding injuries, according to Dr. John F. Duff, an orthopedic surgeon in Danvers, Massachusetts.

For example, a child needs proper skills for handling a lacrosse stick to catch the ball without hitting a teammate or injuring a shoulder. Make sure your child's program teaches technique in preseason clinics and throughout the season.

Make sure coaches include warm-ups and cool-downs in your child's sports routine. A proper warm-up before playing is important for kids of all ages, says Duff. It is critical during growth spurts, when children's muscles and tendons are tight.

Small suggests five minutes of mild aerobic exercise, such as jumping jacks or running in place, as well as sport-specific exercises, such as tossing a basketball, followed by gentle stretching of leg, torso, arm, and neck muscles.

The practice or game should be followed by about four minutes of a free-playing exercise, like catch, for younger kids, and stretching, for older kids.

Insist upon well-trained coaches. Be sure the coach has been trained in basic sports fitness and conditioning and knows basic first aid. He should also have an emergency medical plan.

There is a national set of coaching standards, and parents should urge that coaches meet those standards.

Teach and enforce rules. Many rules of play are designed to prevent injuries. Prohibitions against spearing in football or high-sticking in hockey aim to protect players but they must be enforced by coaches and refs. Modifications to the rules, such as forbidding checking in hockey, should be considered if the skill level is low.

In addition, league rules regarding the length of the season are devised to maintain children's physical and psychological well-being. Make sure your child's coach follows these rules.

EQUIPMENT

Outfit your child properly. Face masks, mouth guards, shin guards, and other protective gear greatly reduce the likelihood and severity of injuries. Find out what protective equipment is required and make sure your child uses it during every practice and game. If protective equipment is not already provided, buy it yourself.

Protect the eyes. Approximately 30 percent of eye injuries among children under the age of 16 are sports related, and 90 percent of those are preventable. Eye protection, in the form of a face mask or goggles, should be worn for all impact sports, according to Dr. Paul Vinger, a clinical professor of ophthalmology at Tufts Medical School, in Boston. Anytime you have a ball going fast, or fingers flying, you're going to have eye injuries, says Vinger. Eye protection is relatively cheap.

For kids who wear glasses, Vinger advises parents to obtain protective eyewear from a competent eye-care professional who is aware of sports-safety standards. Prescription glasses should be fitted with shatterproof lenses and sports frames that hold the lenses firmly in place.

Be sure the shoe fits. Improper footwear is a major cause of injuries to feet, knees, and ankles. Your child needs footwear that is appropriate for the sports she plays. Avoid

hand-me-downs, which are likely to fit poorly and have worn-down treads. And don't send your child out to play in shoes that have not been broken in.

Keep clothing and equipment clean and in good condition. Check straps, buckles, and laces frequently for wear. Don't let your child leave dirty sports clothes in her locker at school.

Says Duff: I've seen a football team laid low by a staph infection because of unsanitary clothing worn by one youngster.

PLAYING CONDITIONS

Make sure facilities are well maintained. Duff suggests checking for these conditions:

- Playing fields should be free of ruts or bare spots. Benches and equipment should be placed so that players won't run into them. Padded goalposts and rubberized sideline markers should be used.
- Track-and-field surfaces should be smooth and clear of obstructions. Hurdles should be in good repair and balanced. Long-jump pits should be the proper depth, with the right quality of evenly raked sand. For pole vaulting, there should be a safe, well-placed landing pad, secure vaulting box, and poles in good condition. Javelin, discus, and shot-put landing areas should be a safe distance from other athletes and spectators.
- Indoor arenas should have clean, dry, non-slippery floors. Spectators should be kept well away from playing area.
- Ice skating surfaces should have no ruts, and the rink boards should be in good repair.
- Gymnastic equipment should be tested before each event or practice. It should be firmly secured and padded. There should be plenty of mats on the floor.
- Wrestling mats should be in good repair and clean. (Contagious skin conditions can be a problem.) There should be plenty of room for the wrestlers to land when they fall out-of-bounds.
- Swimming pools must have proper chlorine and pH levels, and the water must be deep enough for safe entry for swimming and diving events. The apron should be free of obstructions.

Prepare for weather conditions. When the temperature exceeds 85 degrees and humidity is greater than 70 percent, there is a danger of heat exhaustion or heatstroke. On such days, your child should drink at least two glasses of water before playing sports, and then drink fluids every 15 to 20 minutes throughout the activity. Kids under age 10 should drink until their thirst is satisfied, then drink two to four ounces more. Kids over age 10 should drink until their thirst is satisfied, then drink an additional four to eight ounces.

Sunscreen SPF level 15 should be applied before your child goes outside and reapplied if the child is sweating.

For children at intensive preseason football or soccer practices, play should be scheduled for early or late in the day. For football, loose, white clothing should be worn during

drills; helmets and other heavy, protective equipment should be used only during contact drills.

In cold weather, make sure your child is properly dressed in warm, insulating layers, with his head well-covered, if permitted. Teach your child to recognize the warning signs of frostbite, such as tingling in fingers, toes, and face.

If your child is playing outdoor field sports in wet weather, he should wear shoes with extra traction, such as screw-in cleats.

Also, use a nonabsorbent soccer ball in wet weather; leather balls become waterlogged, making heading dangerous.

Teach your child what to do if he is caught in an electrical storm. He should stay away from open fields, trees, and bodies of water. If possible, get children indoors or inside a car until the storm passes. If caught out in the open, he should lie down and curl into a ball.

No matter what precautions you take, your child may still get hurt. Injuries, unfortunately, are part of the games. But, with these guidelines and common sense, most injuries can be prevented. And you can rest easier while your young athletes are out on the field.

PLAY BALL – SAFELY

It's that time of year again. Almost three million kids around the world are gearing up to play baseball and softball. But before your youngster grabs his or her bat and ball and heads for the ballpark, you might want to check out these safety products, which can prevent or minimize injuries.

- Softer baseballs or softballs, which have a polyurethane-foam core instead of cork or rubber, can lessen the severity of the nearly 50,000 ball-impact injuries to the head and face each year, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Little League baseball allows the use of these balls in games.
- Face guards prevent oral, dental, and ocular injuries. They are made of clear plastic or metal that attaches to the sides of a batting helmet and covers the chin to the tip of the nose.
- The use of breakaway bases would prevent about 98 percent of all softball and baseball sliding injuries, according to Dr. David H. Janda, M.D., director of the Institute for Preventive Sports Medicine, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. It costs only \$400 to equip a field with breakaway bases. A breakaway base (as shown in the photo), is snapped into grommets. The grommets are attached to an anchored rubber mat that holds the base in place unless dislodged by a sliding runner.

BICYCLE HELMETS SAVE LIVES

Approximately 400,000 children are treated each year for bike injuries, and nearly 400 die, mostly from head-related trauma. Despite this chilling statistic, only 15 percent of U.S. bicyclists under age 14 wear helmets, according to the National Safe Kids Campaign.

You can set a good example by wearing helmets when you bike. Getting your child to wear her helmet is step one; making sure it fits properly is step two.

A bike helmet that doesn't fit properly will do little to protect your child's head from serious injury. Use the following guidelines for fitting protective headgear:

- The helmet should fit snugly.
- The front edge of the helmet should rest less than an inch above the eyebrows.
- The chin strap should be tight, centered, and always fastened when riding or playing.
- Never use a cracked helmet.

OVERUSE INJURIES: ON THE RISE AMONG KIDS

Twelve-year-old Brian stopped playing basketball last winter so that he could work on his soccer year-round. He plays indoors and out, 12 months a year. He practices every day.

Lately, though, Brian has been complaining that his knee hurts. He limped off the field of his last game. The pain has steadily worsened, so his parents take him to the doctor.

The doctor makes a diagnosis: osteochondritis dissecans, better known as teenager's knee. While Brian has been pounding up and down the soccer field for the past 12 months, the growth cartilage at the bottom of his thighbone has been grinding against the top of the shinbone, causing a stress fracture of the joint's surface cartilage.

Teenager's knee is an overuse injury. Unlike acute injuries, which are caused by a single, severe trauma, overuse injuries result from repetitive micro-trauma to bones or joints caused by doing the same activity whether it's running, throwing a baseball, or flexing the lower back over and over again.

Overuse injuries, such as teenager's knee, Little League elbow, swimmer's shoulder, and gymnast's back, are becoming much more common than in the past. Sports-medicine experts attribute this rise to the growth of organized sports for kids, early specialization, and sports with year-round seasons. Children are especially vulnerable to overuse injuries because their bones are growing.

Parents and coaches should be on the lookout for a pattern of symptoms that typically occurs as an overuse injury develops. First, a child will have sore muscles for a few hours after a workout. Next, muscle pain will persist into the following morning. Later, a child will have pain toward the end of a workout, and then throughout the entire workout. Finally, the pain will occur with routine motions.

When symptoms of an overuse injury are present, it is best to have your child see a doctor with training in sports medicine, preferably in pediatric sports medicine.

To prevent overuse injuries, Dr. Eric Small, a children's sports-medicine specialist, recommends that kids spend no more than five days a week playing any one sport. He strongly advises against year-round specialization in a single sport. Says Small: Overuse injuries are a lot less likely for two-sport kids.

Sportsmanship

Being a Good Sport

<http://www.mhsaa.com/services/library/gdsport.html>

Sport, an age-old respectable pursuit, has emerged in the media and in education as a front runner, a model of what it takes to build character. In any sport, “being a good sport” means acting in a way that meets certain high ethical standards.

Sports require you to develop an amazing array of character traits. As an athlete you have to become sensitive to something beyond the stated rules of the sport – you have to learn the unwritten rules of what athletes expect from one another. Briefly told, it's what we call the ethics of good sportsmanship, or of “being a good sport.” For instance, in any athletic training or competition you'll learn things such as patience, courage, self-discipline, coordination, controlling emotions, being attentive in the face of tense or tedious moments – and these are all the stuff that goes into being a good sport. In addition, as we all know, playing in your favorite sport is one of life's great pleasures. And it's a source of valuable self-esteem, particularly when you work hard to develop athletic prowess.

Sport is a testing ground for many traits that go into being a good person. Here are the traits that make up being a good sport.

1. First, you have to develop basic skills of the game.

The physical demands in every sport involve a delicate coordination of mind and body. There are different yardsticks in every sport for speed, strength, endurance, coordination, stamina, and even style. The physical prowess involved in golf is different than that required for hockey. As an athlete, you want to excel in whatever the game demands. You're committed to using your skills for one purpose – for the sake of winning. In addition to the physical demands, you'll learn to be daring, to hope, to develop quickness of mind, and the ability to size up your opponent. These are all traits we can use throughout life.

2. Next, you have to practice, and that means discipline.

You have to get into a practice mode when you get into a sport. Sports have to be practiced just as the piano has to be practiced. Practice means repetition. Practicing of technique often can be fun, but in any case it's crucial to success. The idea behind practice is that eventually the skill you are aiming at comes under hand. Once you achieve a skill it becomes like a habit, second nature, and the difficulty disappears. When practicing, each of us has a different challenge, whether it's working on your endurance, your coordination, your speed, or your concentration--and it's great when you start to master each part.

3. Playing by the rules (not cheating) goes without saying.

It's much more fun to win than to lose, and people are sometimes tempted to bend the rules in order to win. That's why sports have judges or referees. It's a fact of life that there are winners and losers. Losing is an inevitable part of living. Playing by the rules means

that someone will lose the game, or someone will bungle a particular move – and being the loser is humbling. But it's also good because it helps strengthen character. And playing by the rules means that the winner wins with honor, and that it was a good game. By “good game” I mean that the players were equally matched, it was competitively challenging, it was fairly played, and the best players won.

4. At the bottom, being a good sport requires courage.

The hallmark of a good sport is someone with courage. Courage comes into play, for instance, by displaying more of nobility and less of shame if you are defeated. It takes courage to be humble and proud in defeat. But by doing so you pre-serve your self-respect and show that you know that winning is important, but it's not all-important. Being a good sport means recognizing that character is more important than who won. Courage also comes into play in how you handle getting hurt. Few activities help build courage the way sports do.

5. Dealing with emotions – such as anger.

It's a skill to be able to control your emotions in difficult circumstances. Anger is the most common emotion that can get you into trouble in any sport. Few activities help build the proper control of our passions the way sports do.

6. Winning gives a boost to your self-esteem, which is valuable and pleasurable.

Winning heightens your personal confidence, and the oomph you get from win-ning does great things to promote a healthy self-esteem. When you win, you are an object of admiration and esteem from others. Winning also means that you have achieved a certain excellence in your skill.

You might have further ideas of your own, which could be added to expand this list. The interesting thing about sports is that it's hard to fathom any other area of life which can boast of so many character-building features!

Remember that playing in sports isn't work except, of course, for those who make money doing it. It's supposed to invigorate you and give you a break from the hum-drum of the everyday.

However, some people are too intense in their competition, and that isn't fun for them or their partners.

You may have a variety of reasons for playing your sport. For some, it's a simple therapy, a healthful exercise, and for others it's an outlet for aggression. For everyone, though, it's a vehicle for character building and a source of occasional personal triumphs.

Regardless of motive, each participant in the sport will gain in excellence in one way or another. That's why the modern Olympics founder, Baron de Coubertin, said this about the Olympic Games: “The important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part; as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well.”

John Alan Cohan

Reprinted from Wrestling USA

Coaches Code of Ethics

The function of a coach is to educate students through participation in interscholastic competition. An interscholastic program should be designed to enhance academic achievement and should never interfere with opportunities for academic success. Each student-athlete should be treated as though he or she were the coaches' own, and his or her welfare should be uppermost at all times. Accordingly, the following guidelines for coaches have been adopted by the Board of Directors.

The coach shall be aware that he or she has a tremendous influence, for either good or ill, on the education of the student-athlete and, thus, shall never place the value of winning above the value of instilling the highest ideals of character.

The coach shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession. In all personal contact with student-athletes, officials, athletic directors, school administrators, the state high school athletic association, the media, and the public, the coach shall strive to set an example of the highest ethical and moral conduct.

The coach shall take an active role in the prevention of drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse.

The coach shall avoid the use of alcohol and tobacco products when in contact with players.

The coach shall promote the entire interscholastic program of the school and direct his or her program in harmony with the total school program.

The coach shall master the contest rules and shall teach them to his or her team member. The coach shall not seek an advantage by circumvention of the spirit or letter of the rules.

The coach shall exert his or her influence to enhance sportsmanship by spectators, both directly and by working closely with cheerleaders, pep club sponsors, booster clubs, and administrators.

The coach shall respect and support contest officials. The coach shall not indulge in conduct which would incite players or spectators against the officials. Public criticism of officials or players is unethical.

Before and after contests, coaches for the competing teams should meet and exchange cordial greetings to set the correct tone for the event.

A coach shall not exert pressure on faculty members to give student-athletes special consideration

A coach shall not scout opponents by any means other than those adopted by the league and/or state high school athletic association.

Coaches Keep the Flame of Sportsmanship Burning

<http://www.mhsaa.com/services/library/sa2.html>

The first and foremost guardian of the sacred flame of sportsmanship is the coach. His or her ultimate responsibility cannot be shuttled off to the athletic director, principal or cheerleaders. Of paramount importance is that this trust cannot be shuttled to the referees. As the leader of the TEAM FAMILY, the coach is responsible to train each member in this basic fundamental of sportsmanship: respect others, and in so doing you will earn respect for yourself. Of course, the coach needs support in t his endeavor from other members of the sportsmanship team such as school administrators, cheerleaders and officials; however, the final responsibility of teaching lies squarely on the shoulders of THE COACH.

Why is the flame of sportsmanship sacred? It is because sportsmanship is the spiritual and moral side of athletics. It can permeate the soul of a competitor and lift sports to a lifetime learning experience where lessons of the heart are never forgotten. As someone has said, "Sportsmanship is timeless, endless." In its mission statement, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) says:

"Good sportsmanship is viewed by the NFHS as a commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities which are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. The ideals of sportsmanship apply equally to all activity disciplines. Individuals, regardless of their role in activities, are expected to be aware of their influence on the behavior of others and model good sportsmanship."

Sportsmanship's flame has always been a fragile and sometimes flickering light. What are some of the errant vectors in today's world of sports that threaten this precious ideal? Although gamesmanship always has been a negative force to some degree, currently it is amplified by taunting, hazing, harassing, gesturing, fighting, inciting crowds, questioning calls, and "in-your-face" competitive antics. Professional sports have many good models for youth, yet there are a number of highly visible stars w ho through words and deeds desecrate the foundations of sportsmanship.

Invariably, such behavior seeps down into the "follow-the-leader" tendencies of impressionable youth. When this happens, the coach must act as a filter to restore proper perspective to the high school scene. This is accomplished primarily through example, yet it still requires talking both collectively and individually to athletes in practices, as well as before, during and after games. The theme of discussion is basically "treat others as you would have them treat you."

Players should be well-versed in the coach's expectations for the team. Such expectations as shaking hands with opponents before and after games, respecting calls of officials, and following not only the rules of the sport but also the spirit of rules. They should know what disciplinary action to expect if they violate the basic tenets of sportsmanship. They should be taught what the intrinsic rewards are that come from playing with honor, courage and consideration of others under all circumstances.

Henri Frederic Amiel, a 19th century Swiss philosopher said, "Every life is a profession of faith. Every man's conduct is a sermon that is forever preaching to others." What

Amiel knew is that the greatest force for influencing others lies not in our lofty words, but in our personal action and example. Knute Rockne, always a model of sportsmanship as a person, athlete and coach, also knew this truism: “One man practicing sportsmanship is better than 50 preaching it.”

A coach who implores the team to practice good sportsmanship and then breaks under game pressure, consciously or unconsciously, engaging in a tirade against officials, completely nullifies the effect of his previous exhortations. Conversely, a coach who controls emotions while under duress gives the team a tangible guide for good conduct that words could never convey.

Chris Evert, winner of 157 tennis singles championships, including 18 Grand Slam titles, said “Sports is one of the world's great forms of communications, which is why it's so important to me that the message I deliver be a good one...Nothing reveals more about athletes (coaches) than the way they handle stress.”

Winning and sportsmanship can go hand-in-hand. Losing and sportsmanship also can walk hand-in-hand. A key role of the coach is always to glean an element of winning from every loss. With good sportsmanship as a constant companion, this goal always can be realized. Good sports are winners in their own right.

Yes, sportsmanship is a sacred flame and the primary keeper of that flame is the coach. What greater challenge and opportunity could any career offer than the chance to help young people develop the spiritual side of their nature through the TEAM FAMILY with the coach as their exemplar.

—*Wilbur Braithwaite*

There Must Be More Than Winning and Losing

<http://www.mhsaa.com/services/library/epva4.html>

Keeping high school sports in their proper educational perspective in the 90s is becoming increasingly more difficult for educators. We all know that America loves a winner. The media focuses much attention on those individuals and/or teams that are crowned state champions. Parents often perceive the interscholastic program as the means whereby their son or daughter will develop sports skills that will ultimately lead to a collegiate athletic scholarship.

It cannot be argued that the need for ethics or a body of principle transcends almost every walk of life. No place in our society is this more evident today than in education. To truly understand and deal with this issue, one must first have thorough comprehension of the purpose for the interscholastic program as a part of the curriculum.

The origin of the South Dakota High School Activities Association dates back to 1905. At that time, the interscholastic objective was said to be a consequence of concern expressed by numerous populations that schools and society were not sufficiently teaching those traits necessary to sustain character to attain success in a competitive society. Then, sports were viewed as a practical and motivating way to accomplish those goals. The interscholastic objective was teaching morals, character and the American system of achievement.

Somehow or another, those of us in charge of the interscholastic program have gradually allowed the goals and objectives to focus more on winning than participation. In far too many instances, the over-emphasis on winning has replaced some of the more important time-tested goals and objectives of high school sports. In this modern day and age, specialization in one sport on a year-round basis is not uncommon. The intense pressure to win that is imposed upon high school coaches discourages widespread participation by all members of an athletic squad. Communities, especially school boards, should re-evaluate policies that call for dismissal of competent and professional coaches who may not have recorded as many wins as the general public expected.

One of the primary purposes for interscholastic sports in the school curricula is to prepare young adolescents for the challenges of adult life. Student athletes are being shortchanged if all they take from the interscholastic programs are the skills related to playing the sport. We must offer the student athlete things that will last them a lifetime and help them to be a better person and better equipped to deal with the challenges of life. If it's done right, participation in athletics, win or lose, can become one of the most powerful and influential educational experiences that can accrue to teenage boys and girls.

As educators, it is our obligation, it is our duty, that we provide what students need in order to receive a well-rounded education. In this regard, it is important that our schools provide the student of today with the best education possible for this kind of world that now exists.

It is undisputed that interscholastic athletics and fine arts activities are vital parts of the total educational experience of students.

As the twentieth century winds down, we need to remind ourselves of the primary goals and objectives for sponsoring school sports. In that regard, we need to eliminate the over-emphasis on winning and concentrate more on character development and the values needed to become a successful person.

A good activities program will make a concerted effort to teach, but not confined to, good sportsmanship; the important of persistence; perseverance; commitment to excellence; the want and desire to be the best you can be at every pursuit; learning how to achieve and commit to a goal, pride, devotion, dedication, respect for those in authority, honesty, trustworthiness, the ability to work with others in a team setting, caring about others, self-discipline, respect for rules and regulations, stick-to-itiveness in developing a strong work ethic are but a few examples of the lessons for life that should be taught, developed and nurtured through activity participation.

Excerpts from an article by Marlyn Goldhammer, Executive Director, South Dakota High School Activities Association. Reprinted from Kansas High School Activities Journal. m

Are They Playing Fair?

<http://www.mhsaa.com/services/library/fair.html>

Are coaches and players better behaved today than they were in years past? Frankly, I haven't found anyone who states conduct in the pursuit of victory has improved. A good deal of that behavior is directed at us. That is why I never pass up an opportunity to participate in seminars and conferences designed to address the issue of sportsmanship.

Such a conference was recently convened in Southern California and I was included as a panelist. "Pursuing Victory With Honor" was held at Cal State-Long Beach and the hall was filled to capacity. In fact Character Counts, organizers of the day-long conference, expected 450 to attend; 700 showed up. That fact alone spoke volumes that sports needs to reflect the best in us, not the worst.

My assignment was to answer this question from the officiating perspective: "What would you like to see less of and more of in sports?" I distilled my thoughts to three Points:

1. Less "hot" bodies and more "warm" bodies.
2. Less lip service and more muscle.
3. Less gamesmanship and more sportsmanship.

Let me explain.

Point 1: The hot body was in reference to the boorish and often physically abusive behavior toward officials. The warm body reference addresses the continuing need for more officials. If the hot body count continues to rise, the warm body count will continue to decrease. Simple as that.

Point 2: Administrators need to be proactive in supporting officials. Many give lip service to that concept, but then quickly wilt from such a course of action when the heat gets turned up by the media, fans or a school.

Point 3: This point was an underlying theme for the entire conference and I was glad for the opportunity to talk about it at some length. Sportsmanship is learning the rules and assiduously playing within those rules. Sportsmanship also has a component of fairness attached to it. "Being a good sport" means not trying to take advantage of an opponent by consciously bending or breaking a rule based on your expectation of not being caught. Gamesmanship is the antithesis of sportsmanship. If you win because of gamesmanship you have "won" but you do not have victory. You have no victory because you have "won" without honor. Without honor there can be no victory.

One coach on the panel told the audience that for a long time she taught her players to play strictly by the rules. After some years, she had to relent and teach gamesmanship in order to compete with the other coaches in her league. I was struck by what she had told us.

I finished with the following thoughts: When coaches teach and players practice gamesmanship, it becomes just about impossible for officials to deliver a performance those participants will find acceptable. We need their help to do our best. We need their help to permit us to concentrate on the critical needs of the contest. We should not have

to spread our focus trying to catch someone purposely subverting the integrity of the game. That is a lose-lose situation.

Barry Mano
Referee Magazine

Spectators Cross Line When Enthusiasm Turns Ugly

<http://www.mhsaa.com/services/library/sa3.html>

Bustling inside a warm gymnasium foyer, folks stomp their feet, brush snow off their coats and smile.

A friendly ticket taker greets them, along with the smell of buttery popcorn and the high school bands blaring rendition of “China Grove” by the Doobie Brothers.

Standing at the entrance --just under the No Pop in the Gym sign -- they scan the crowded bleachers, looking for friends or for a seat.

They settle in for 32 minutes of action. It’s their team against their arch rival. Anticipation mounts.

Ah. There’s nothing like an evening of high school hoops.

Bright red and blue and green signs scattered over the walls welcome the visiting team and encourage the home team.

The opposing coaches meet on the sidelines near mid-court, shake hands and turn to watch warm-ups. Arms akimbo, they lean back and chat.

Managers rush around, setting up water bottles and straightening towels. Scorekeepers bend over their books, inking in the lineups. Statisticians check their pencil points. Assistant coaches adjust their ties. Timers and announcers wait.

Buzzzzz.

The teams line up by their coaches and the crowd unites on its feet, singing the National Anthem. The starters are announced.

Finally. Game time.

Funny, but this is when some of those smiling, happy fans disappear. Somehow, the tipoff gives them a license to be rude, obnoxious and immature.

And I’m being diplomatic here.

Take a recent game I attended. An official whistled, signaling an offensive foul. Immediately a forty-something man behind me stood up and screeched, “You idiot! That’s not a foul.”

His blonde beard contrasted sharply with his burning red face. The tendons bulged in his neck as he showered those around him with spittle and screams.

We ducked.

Then there’s another area fan. He went to an opposing school gym to watch a game and ended up spewing obscenities. Really.

“The home athletic director came over to me and said, ‘He’s your fan. You get rid of him,’ “ reported the athletic director of the visiting team. “I went up to him, gave him his \$3 back and told him he had to leave.

“Heck, it wasn’t even my home game. The money came out of my pocket.”

If all it takes is \$3 to get rid of 'em, I would do it too.

Or how about this one? A woman stood during a timeout and yelled at the coach of her son's team, "Get that (point guard) outta there. He can't even dribble."

Yikes.

At another game, a seventh-grade boy seated next to me kept calling the opposing players crude names. He was old enough to know better. When I was his age, I knew better.

"Does your mother know you talk like that?" I finally asked him.

My answer came in his silence.

This 13-year-old kid learned to talk like that from someone. Maybe from a parent or from a friend's parents. Or maybe at a Division I or professional sporting event.

Hey, these are high school athletes -- 15, 16 and 17-year-old boys and girls. Find another place for your petty whining and booing.

"I think of high school athletic events as an extension of the classroom," another area athletic director told me at a recent game. "The students and athletes are learning here. Many times the way a parent behaves at a game is not what we want our kids to learn."

No kidding.

Sure, it's great when parents get involved and show up at contests to support their kids. And not every parent is a poor sport. Some are, though.

Do they honestly think their screaming at an official is going to change a call? Will the official stop the game, march over and say, "You're right. I do need a new pair of glasses."?

Yes, officials make mistakes. Coaches and players do, too.

They aren't intentional ones.

Kids aren't getting paid to be out there. Coaches and officials don't haul in the big bucks, either. In fact the main reason they do what they do is to have fun. They enjoy the sport.

The same goes for the fans, I'm sure. Passion and love for a particular school is a good thing. Rivalries and sold-out games and showdowns between unbeaten teams are great.

When enthusiasm turns into venom and hatred, the high school game is no longer fun.

If ignorant, obnoxious fans suck all the fun out of the game, what happens next?

No more officials to referee the games. No more coaches to direct and lead the teams. No more kids trying out.

What then?

The empty bleachers, littered with cups and candy wrappers, will be silent but for the echoes of taunts and jeers.

The scoreboard, unlit.

The clock, still.

Jane Bos

Jane Bos is a prep sports writer for the Grand Rapids Press.

Who Do We Blame For Our Loss?

<http://www.mhsaa.com/services/library/sa1.html>

I am writing this article in response to something I read in the paper from a coach, which I found very disturbing, especially in light of our constant quest to improve sportsmanship among our athletes, students, and fans. This is something I believe every coach, athlete, parent and spectator should consider and take a critical look at how they themselves handle these situations.

It concerns public criticism and blaming of officials for a loss!

I want to start off by saying that I have yet to meet an official that goes out to deliberately make one team or another lose. Keep in mind that most of the calls that officials are asked to make are JUDGMENT CALLS. We, as coaches, also make judgment calls: As to who to play, when to play them, what play to do, etc. These are calls we have to make as coaches based on our best JUDGMENT of the situation, and sometimes they work, and sometimes they don't (in other words, sometimes we are right, and some times we are wrong). It is our call to make, and we do the best we can based on our best professional judgment of the situation. The same is true for the calls made by the professional officials we hire for that purpose.

When we blame officials, or for that matter blame anyone, for our losses, we are degrading the effort of all individuals involved in the contest. Instead of blaming anyone for our losses, we should congratulate our opponents for out-playing us on that day. I feel this approach would be better for our relationship with our opponents, as well as better for our players, our spectators and the program and sport as a whole.

Let our athletes know that they played hard, but, on that particular day, our opponent played a little better. It wasn't luck or someone's fault we lost; it was because they played a good game. It is the very nature of athletics that there is always a winner and a loser. There is no shame in being the loser, especially if you gave your best effort. However, when we blame the officials or anyone in particular for our loss, everyone involved in the contest comes out losers. No one intentionally goes out to try and lose a contest, but everyone tries their best to win it, so the winner should be congratulated, and the loser need not look for anyone to blame, not even himself, for the loss.

It has been my experience in watching contests of all kinds for more than 25 years as a coach, an official, and a spectator, that officials do make bad calls, but the bad calls for and against a team tend to even out throughout the course of a game or season. In that time I have never heard a coach give the official credit for the bad calls that went that coach's way. If we don't give credit for bad calls in our favor, then we should not criticize calls we don't agree with. Keep in mind that if the calls tend to even out, then that means that there must have been some other reason for the loss. That reason for the loss would be that our opponent played better that particular night.

We, as coaches, should not be looking for the negatives in a contest or who to blame for the loss. This only leads to a negative and combative attitude in the players towards that opponent or official. This attitude then is carried over to the parents and fans. When we blame officials for the loss, we are sending the message to our athletes that the only way

that opponent can beat us is by cheating. Instead, we should look for the positive things achieved in the contest and work to improve on those things as well as in the areas where we did not perform up to expectations.

I understand the feeling of frustration, as a coach who has watched an athlete work hard to win, when that athlete loses a contest. It is not his fault or your fault or anyone's fault that the loss occurred; the other athlete or team just out-performed our athlete on that day, so give him credit for that effort.

Please keep in mind the challenge of recruiting new officials and the difficulty your athletic director has in getting officials for your contests; it is getting worse every year. One of the reasons for this is the verbal abuse officials receive from fans and players and, in some cases it is physical abuse, which is on the rise. When coaches openly criticize officials, you are only reinforcing and legitimizing this type of behavior from fans.

Officials are on the field, just like boundary lines are on the field, to keep the contest fair for both sides. All the officials I have talked with are involved because they want all the athletes to have as good an experience as possible. If you have a legitimate complaint about an official, there is a process established to file your complaint, voicing it in public is not the way to do it. Remember, it is very hard to argue with a judgment call, you may not agree with it, but there is very little you can do to change it.

I feel that **BLAMING** people for our losses, whether it is officials, players, coaches or spectators, has become a big problem in high school athletics, and it really has no place there. I have offered some ideas in this article, that if we all work together on them and share them with our colleagues we can create a situation in our athletic programs where both sides can feel like winners in a contest, even if we are the team with the lower score on the scoreboard.

Al Nelson

Al Nelson is the athletic director of Wabasha-Kellogg Schools in Minnesota. Edited and reprinted from the Minnesota State High School League Bulletin.

Sportsmanship Begins At Home

<http://www.mhsaa.com/services/library/sa4.html>

Watching televised sporting events, or sitting in the stands at games from youth to the professional level, it's easy to see the cultural Civil War being waged in this country between the driving forces of poor sportsmanship and those who feel that character, ethics, integrity and respect still have a place in athletics.

Frankly, some feel that the battle is being lost.

Some say it's not their obligation to act responsibly. After all, it's not their job to be a "role model."

Some say they have a right to call attention to themselves.

Some say that showing up an opponent is okay.

Some say being anything but first makes you a loser.

Some of us need to say...

Enough!

The concepts of sportsmanship -- displaying strong character as something more important than a game's outcome -- aren't outmoded, old fashioned, passé, or reserved for any one group. If we're truly serious about reversing the disintegration of athletics, we have to return to why we have these games.

It's not about winning.

It's not about getting college scholarships.

It's not just about competition.

The games were created to be fun.

The games were created to help us grow as individuals.

The games were created to provide educational experiences.

If you can't deal with that -- you're part of the problem. Quit reading.

The sportsmanship solution lies at the grassroots levels. You can have all the national and statewide sportsmanship days and programs that you want. Nothing can be accomplished on a broad scale until we understand one thing...

Sportsmanship begins at home.

Schools throughout the state of Michigan continue to take aggressive measures to promote good sportsmanship.

Schools like Temperance-Bedford have student-athletes, coaches, administrators and community members take a pledge to practice good sportsmanship. Those who participate are publicly recognized (*and held accountable*) by having their names published in game programs.

Schools in the Lenawee County Athletic Association participate in Sportsmanship

Nights where football and girls basketball teams spend time after games together sharing snacks.

Schools in the Huron League vie for a traveling sportsmanship banner every year.

Schools like Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart have a pre-game meeting with opponents so that players meet each other before competing.

Schools like Ida and Grandville Calvin Christian met in centerfield in student-initiated prayer before a championship softball game.

Schools of the Northwest Conference rank each other, along with officials, on sportsmanship.

Schools in the Western Michigan “D” League present a “Triple A” Award, recognizing outstanding students for attitude, athletics and academics. Good sportsmanship is a key ingredient of “attitude.”

Schools numbering nearly 500 across the state had over 3,000 students write essays this fall on the importance of sportsmanship in educational athletics.

Finally, schools of the Detroit Catholic League conducted Sportsmanship Nights, where each school had to submit three practical ways to promote sportsmanship. Here are a few samples of what was written:

- From Detroit Catholic Central -- “Zero tolerance for swearing. Absolutely no swearing.”
- From Redford St. Agatha -- “Respect officials. Just as you make mistakes, they can make bad calls.”
- From Southgate Aquinas -- “Have individual players go home and talk to parents and let them know they should not question referees.”

The last example is particularly interesting. Parents often divest themselves of their responsibility to impart values to their children, especially at sporting events, where it’s very common for a student-athlete on the playing surface to be embarrassed by a parent or other family member who berates officials, coaches and anyone else within shouting distance.

It also takes the theme, “Sportsmanship Begins At Home,” to its proper level. While schools can do a lot to promote sportsmanship, if a contradictory message, or worse yet -- no message -- is being given about sportsmanship to a youngster at home, the possibility is strong that their child will follow the negative examples that abound around them.

Many parents will point out to their sons and daughters why a play turned out the way it did when watching a game. In our house, we’re even quicker to point out examples of outstanding and poor sportsmanship to our children.

Parents...what are *you* teaching your kids about sportsmanship?

Hey Crybabies - Keep Quiet!

<http://www.mhsaa.com/services/library/sa5.html>

by Keith Anderson

Having stood on the sidelines of many different sporting events, a guy gets the chance to see many different officials at work.

In the past, we've all taken our fair share of pot shots at officials. Some of those pot shots are deserved, while some may be unprovoked. Let's face it, officials are easy targets for our anger. They don't respond, and they look so darned silly in those goofy striped uniforms.

But do officials really deserve the treatment they receive on a weekly basis? Probably not. But we all seem to think we have the right to vent our frustrations at officials. Whether it's from the comfort of our couch with the remote in hand or in the stands at a local game, some of us just can't help ourselves.

And in the last few years some of us have taken it to the next level.

It used to be that there were just a handful of people who would scream at officials no matter what the sport was. You could count on these guys, usually men trying to relive some glory years, to do everything possible to embarrass officials.

What these guys didn't seem to realize is that the rest of us were embarrassed by them. We were ashamed that these fans were sitting on our side of the field, giving visiting fans and officials the impression that all of the fans from our school were as boorish as these guys.

But officials seemed unfazed by these lobs from the stands. They were not constant, and the officials seemed to understand that every school had a couple of these type fans.

Well, those fans have multiplied in numbers in the last decade or so. Now it seems there are more than just a handful who enjoy leveling criticism at officials. It's still embarrassing, but what's worse, the loudmouths never seem to keep the yapper shut. There is hardly a call that is made today that is not questioned by fans.

All fans seem to think they're getting "jobbed" by every official who doesn't make a call that works in favor of their team.

Officials are not paid to see to it that the home team always gets the benefit of the doubt.

Officials are supposed to make calls that are based on the rules that guide play for each individual sport. In other words, if a team is not following the rules, it is penalized. It's as simple as that.

Without question, officials are going to make some calls that clearly are incorrect, but as one old coach once said, "During the course of a year, those have a tendency to even themselves out."

Today, too many fans boo and contest calls that are obviously correct. It's almost as though they carry the burden of the world outside the doors of competition into the stands

and expect compensation in the form of calls that work only in favor of the home team. What gives?

Officials do not come into a contest with the intent of hindering any particular team, but when they are pelted with one sarcastic remark after another, it becomes difficult for them to officiate the athletes before them.

Most officials are involved with sport because they enjoy the sport. There is very little that is enjoyable about officiating a game when fans can't accept the calls that are made and simply appreciate the competition.

There's nothing wrong with being vocal at a sporting event. In fact, most coaches and athletes prefer a charged atmosphere. But being vocal does not mean officials have to be the target of any frustrations we may feel.

Yelling at officials obviously is not going to help our teams win. It's not going to improve the play of our athletes. And it's certainly not going to improve our relationship with officials.

Do us all a favor, give it a rest. Give yourself a rest. Give our ears a rest.

It's not cute. It's not positive and it's obviously a terrible example for the rest of the people who are in attendance.

Keith Anderson is a staff writer for the Waconia, Minn., Patriot. Reprinted from the Minnesota State High School League Bulletin .

A Student Surveys On Sportsmanship

<http://www.mhsaa.com/services/library/sa6.html>

Erin Jury, junior at Houghton Lake High School, attended the MHSAA Statewide Sportsmanship Summit in Lansing on September 24. Afterward, she conducted an informal survey of student-athletes at Houghton Lake and neighboring high schools to find out what kinds of fan behavior impact student-athletes positively or negatively. She made a point to talk to athletes from all varsity sports, and she asked the same three open-ended questions of all students.

Here's what she found:

1. As an athlete, what examples can you give of comments parents or fans have made which hurt or upset you during a game?
 - Parents who yell at the refs embarrass their children and the team.
 - When fans badger or make smart comments to the refs it affects the student athletes. Fans need to understand what a hard job refs have and not criticize calls they may not understand or be in a position to judge.
 - Parents of athletes who try to be the coach for their child only hurt their child. Parents need to come to games to offer support only, not advice on how to play.
 - Parents who yell criticisms at students or the team when mistakes are made upset individuals and the team. Ex: A softball player felt embarrassed by striking out and was even more humiliated by a parent who yelled comments about her hitting ability and the team's lack of skill.
 - Parents of star athletes sometimes put a lot of pressure on their children to lead their teams and openly criticize them when teams aren't as successful as the parent thinks they should be.
 - A lot of fan problems occur during basketball games when fans criticize the refs and in sports like volleyball, wrestling, softball, and baseball where fans are close to the playing field and can be heard by athletes. Students who run track or cross country, ski, golf, or play football and soccer don't hear much from the crowd that can disrupt their concentration. Wrestlers feel that their spectators are very supportive because there aren't as many problems with fans disputing calls by refs.
 - Some athletes have bad attitudes and use trash talk and taunts to try to take the other team out of their game. Football players sometimes react to opponents who display cocky attitudes.
 - Opposing team crowds are generally more rude to other teams, but some schools show better sportsmanship than others.
 - During tournaments, fans are much more intense and rude to opposing team players and their fans.
 - The majority of the most negative fan behavior comes from adults.

2. What one behavior shown by parents or fans during games would you like to see changed?
 - Disrespectful, taunting cheers
 - Excessive noise, booing, deliberate distractions when basketball players are at the free throw line
 - Humiliating chanting when students commit fouls or foul out of basketball games
 - Players and parents need to show more respect for officials
 - Parents need to know what their position as a spectator means
 - Recognition from fans when someone makes a good play, not just a negative reaction when individuals or the team makes mistakes
 - Students who aren't team superstars don't get much positive recognition from coaches, fans, parents, and their teammates. Coaches and fans need to understand that students who sit the bench work just as hard at practice as the starters, and without their contribution, star players would not be as good. Fans and coaches shouldn't make athletes who sit the bench feel as if they don't exist or humiliate them by not cheering or supporting them at the same level as the star athletes
3. What positive actions on the part of the fans get you pumped up during a game?
 - Student Spirit Clubs
 - Pep Band or Marching Band playing at game
 - Positive encouragement from the fans in the form of loud cheering
 - Signs, posters made by students or cheerleaders
 - Fans dressed in school colors
 - Pep assemblies that give equal recognition to all student athletes
 - Student athletes should support each other by attending games and matches in all sports. This is especially true for individualized sports like wrestling and all girls' athletics!
 - Spectators include more than just parents of the team members
 - Why do cheerleaders only cheer for boys sports? Female athletes should be just as important to their schools as male athletes, yet fight songs, pep assemblies, cheerleaders, etc. relate more to boys' sports at many schools.

From the MHSAA February 1998 Bulletin

TRAVEL TEAMS: Before your child joins one . . . be prepared

<http://road.uww.edu/road/jonesd/Coaching-463/Influence%20of%20the%20Social%20Milieu/Parents/Other%20Parental%20Issues/travelteams.html>

by Rick Wolff

It can be a real thrill for your young athlete to be chosen to play on a travel team. But before he or she joins one, you should be aware of what is involved.

Travel teams are hand-picked all-star squads made up of the best athletes in a sport in town. They are usually organized by age. There are travel teams for kids as young as four (but don't get me started on that.) My own feeling is travel teams shouldn't exist for any child under the age of 10. For too many kids younger than 10, the experience actually discourages- rather than encourages- their involvement in sports.

“No studies that I know of indicate that playing on an under-10 travel team makes any difference in a child's long-range athletic development.”

--Rick Wolff

Say, for example, a young child gets very little playing time, or he has an abrasive coach. Those experiences are enough to sour a young athlete on team sports for life. Or say his coach tells him, “next year you'll get to play more.” To a 9 or 10-year-old seeking instant gratification, asking him to wait a year is asking a lot.

Some parents and coaches oppose travel teams altogether because of the pressure they cause a young athlete. Parents wanting their child to star can pressure him to perform well. Or the pressure to perform can come from coaches, particularly those whose main objective is to win. The child's peers can also create pressure, as kids want to perform well in front of their friends.

People who aren't fans of travel teams also point out they can be a blow to the self-esteem of the kids who don't even make the team.

But, as travel teams are here to stay, here are some tips if your child is chosen to join one.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

What are the coach's goals?

No matter what kind of league your child is joining, it is a good idea to find out about the coach's philosophy. But it's especially important with travel teams because they often attract the more competitive coaches. Is the coach's goal to win at any cost? Or is he more interested in developing the children's skills?

In addition to talking with the coach, talk with parents of kids who have previously played for him.

Know the coach's style.

Does the coach yell at the kids a lot? Is he overly demanding? If he is, and your child is particularly sensitive, maybe your child isn't a good match for the team. If your child decides to join the team anyway, at least you'll both know what to expect.

Find out about playing time.

Travel teams don't have rules that guarantee playing time to every child. In fact, many travel team coaches assume that the parents simply want the team to win. As a result, these coaches play their best players all the time.

BE AWARE OF COMMITMENT

Time: Learn what's called for in the game and practice schedule. For example, it's not unusual for the schedule for an ice hockey travel team to run from Labor Day through March. The commitment usually includes two practices a week plus games on Saturday and Sunday.

Soccer travel teams can have even longer seasons, running for the entire school year.

Find out how the coach feels about a child missing an occasional practice or game (Don't be surprised if he's not particularly understanding!)

Money: Know what expenses are involved - for travel, tournament fees, and extras, such as trainer's fees, (yes, some teams hire professional trainers). Costs can vary widely, depending on the sport and the league.

Travel team ice hockey, for example, can cost from \$1000 to \$1700. Included in the costs are travel, ice rink rental fees, coaches' fees, and referee fees. This doesn't include the costs of equipment, uniforms, and any tournament fees that the team might enter. Soccer travel teams can run perhaps \$500, plus tournament fees.

SIT DOWN WITH YOUR CHILD

Share what you've learned with your child. Explain to him the kind of long-range commitment he is making by joining the team. Share with him any information you have learned from the coach about his expectations, or about the coach himself, such as his coaching style.

CRISIS!

Even after you've prepared your child for the season, he may join the team and want to quit. Be ready to help him decide if he wants to stay on the team, or "step down" to the local rec team.

Understand that leaving a travel team can be psychologically difficult for a child, especially after the fanfare of having made the team.

In most cases, doing your homework might save you - and your child - a lot of heartaches down the road.

Teaching Life Lessons Through Sports

<http://road.uww.edu/road/jonesd/Coaching-463/Life%20lessons.htm>

by Dr. Michael Simon

Playing sports can teach kids things like discipline, respect, and responsibility- but kids need your guidance to learn these life lessons. This story will show you how to find and use “teachable moments” on the playing field.

In this three-part article we will focus on sportsmanship, which, at its core, deals with right and wrong. We will present two situations each day, one to use with younger athletes (ages 6-11) and one for older athletes (12 and older).

The situations are divided into age groups because a child's attitude about sportsmanship depends on his cognitive development; younger athletes will think, act, and feel differently about what is right and wrong than older athletes.

These precise situations may never come up, but similar ones probably will. Use them as a guide, and keep your eyes open. Sports can truly be a wonderful tool to help you teach your kids about life!

How to use this story

- Read the sports situation and questions to familiarize yourself with the issue at hand.
- Read the age-appropriate situation to your child.
- Use the sample questions to encourage discussion.
- Identify and discuss other relevant situations in sports, including pro sports.
- Finally, discuss real-life situations, such as things that happen in school or at home, that deal with the issue at hand.

Part 1

For parents of older athletes (over 12):

The Situation:

The coach of a traveling all-star team always starts his child, even though there are more deserving players.

The Issue: Fairness

Fairness involves playing by the rules, taking turns, and providing equal and merited opportunity. In this case, the coach is playing favorites. While there is probably little a player could do to change a coach's bias, learning about equal and merited opportunity will help your child try his or her best regardless of the situation, and act fairly when placed in positions of leadership.

What You Can Do

1. Ask your child:

- How would you feel if you were on this team and the coach always started his child? Is that fair or unfair? Why?
 - Why do you think the coach is starting his child over more deserving players?
 - What would you do if you were the coach? Why?
 - What would you do as a player on this team? Why?
2. Explore as many sides of the argument as possible.
 3. Discuss the concepts of fairness, and equal and merited opportunity by saying something like “It’s only fair that everyone on the team gets a chance to show their stuff” or “By giving everyone a chance to play, the coach will be doing his part to strengthen team unity.”
 4. Ask your child to think of other situations in sports that are not fair, why those situations are unfair, what he or she would do in those situations, and why.
 5. Ask your child to identify and discuss other situations outside of sports (such as at school or in situations with peers) that are unfair. Examples include situations involving prejudice and preferential treatment.

For parents of young athletes (6 to 11):

The Situation:

A gifted youngster who has never played in an organized program is playing on his first basketball team. In his excitement, he is hogging the ball and even stealing it from his teammates.

The Issue: Fairness

For the young athlete, learning to share, take turns, and cooperate is a major milestone, especially in team sports. While children do not fully understand the concept of “team play” until the age of 8 to 10 years, it is okay to begin to encourage and reinforce the ideas of taking turns and sharing when a child is as young as 3 or 4.

What You Can Do

1. Ask your child:
 - How would you feel if this player was on your team?
 - Why do you think this boy is hogging the ball?
 - What do you think is the right thing to do? Why?
 - What could you say to this boy if you were on his team?
2. Discuss the concept of fairness, sharing, and taking turns by saying something like “Taking turns makes playing sports fun for everyone,” or “Sharing the ball let’s everyone get a chance to play.”
3. Ask your child to think of other situations in sports that are not fair and what he would do in those situations and why.

4. Identify and discuss situations outside of sports (at school or with peers) that are unfair. Examples include not sharing toys and cutting lines.

Parents' Points to Ponder

Here are 10 rules to remember when you're on the sidelines at your kid's game.

by Rick Wolff

Parenting a young athlete can be a very interesting experience. When your son or daughter makes a great play, you feel as though you will burst with pride. But what about when your young athlete goes out for a pass and drops the ball due to obvious pass interference - obvious to everyone but the official! How do you react to that? Or how about when your son or daughter's coach makes a bad decision. Are you the one that points it out to him from the stands? Here are 10 simple reminders written by Rick Wolff that will help you be a better spectator and a better supporter of your athlete.

1. **CHEER**, don't **SNEER**! Only positive words should come out of your mouth during a game. There is simply no place for negative comments or criticism.
2. **WALK** before you **SQUAWK**. If you feel a sudden urge to yell at the coach or the ref, take a walk and cool off before you say something that will embarrass you - or your child.
3. A **YELL** won't make the team **JELL**. Don't bellow instructions to your child from the sideline. It's boorish and your kid can't hear a word you're saying, anyway!
4. Don't sell them **SHORT**, be a **SPORT**. If the opposing team has played well, give them a pat on the back. Nothing makes a kid feel more special than when a parent from the opposing team tells him how well he played.
5. Don't point and **BLAME** when they lose a **GAME**. When your child's team loses, don't blame it on a bad call, a teammate's error, or anything else. How will your child learn to accept responsibility if you don't?
6. Give 'em a **SMILE** - not **BILE**. Kids always respond to the coach or parent who smiles - not to the adult who criticizes or scowls. Besides, your child wants to see you having fun.
7. **RAISE** with **PRAISE**. That's right, the kids will "raise" their game and their efforts if you praise them. Use any achievement as an excuse for a compliment. They want to believe in themselves and you can help them.
8. For Pete's **SAKE**, give the ump a **BREAK**! Remember, most of the umpires and referees are volunteers donating their time to your kids. And accept it: "Bad" calls are part of sports.
9. **PARALYSIS** by **ANALYSIS**. Avoid replaying the game in the family station wagon on the drive home. If your kid brings the game up, fine. But chances are it's about the last thing he wants to talk about.
10. This I **BESEECH**, practice what your **PREACH**. With too many pro athletes talking trash and misbehaving, parents have to work extra hard to teach kids fair play. Make sure your own sportsmanship is flawless. You're the most important role models kids have!

Coaching Your Own Child

<http://road.uww.edu/road/jonesd/Coaching-463/Influence%20of%20the%20Social%20Milieu/Parents/Coaching%20Your%20Child/own%20kid.htm>

Is it possible to wear both hats and make the experience rewarding for all? You bet. Here are some tips.

by Mickey Rathbun

Your 10-year-old daughter's soccer team needs a coach, and you're thinking of taking the job. Of course, you know it would be a lot of work, but it would give you special time with your daughter each week, and you like the sport. Should you go for it?

Many successful athletes, such as Tiger Woods, Cal Ripken, Jr., and Venus Williams, were coached by their parents and seem to have great relationships with those parents today. But before you envision yourself as the next Earl Woods sharing in your son's every victory, make sure you know what you're getting into.

These surefire tips from sports-parenting experts, including veteran parent-coaches, will help you make the experience a winning one for everybody.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO COACH?

Before rushing into coaching your child, you should honestly examine your motives, says Linda Bunker, a professor at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education and co-author of *Parenting Your Superstar*.

Do you want to perform a needed social service? Or are you trying to live vicariously through your child? Do you want to enhance your daughter's athletic experience and make sure she gets good coaching? Or are you simply concerned with how much playing time she gets?

If you're seeking to gratify your ego or to give your child an unfair advantage, take yourself out of the running immediately.

ARE YOU QUALIFIED TO COACH?

Next, advises Bunker, assess your qualifications. When coaching kids ages 6 to 10, basic skills and rudimentary knowledge of the game are sufficient. With more advanced players, you'll need a more sophisticated awareness of the game. If you're not up to speed, are you willing to learn more about the game by checking out coaching guides or instructional videos or by attending coaching clinics?

Even if you know the sport inside out, you'll be a lousy coach if you don't enjoy being with kids and understand how to relate to kids in the team's age group. You also need to have a knack for organizing drills that are fun as well as instructive.

You should be confident that you can give your child and her teammates a season of constructive, diligent coaching before you take on the job.

HOW DOES YOUR CHILD FEEL?

Once you're satisfied that you're equipped for the job, get your child's support and understanding. Children must understand that they will have to share your attention with

their teammates. They also have to take your guidance-and criticism-just like the other players.

If your child understands the ground rules and still gives you the thumbs up, proceed!

KEEP YOUR ROLES STRAIGHT

To successfully coach your child, you must keep your two roles, as parent and as coach, clearly defined.

One of the great stories of last season's NCAA basketball tournament was the relationship between Homer Drew, coach of the Valparaiso University basketball team, and his son and star player, Bryce. Bryce turned down the opportunity to attend several powerhouse basketball schools to play for his dad. He ended up leading the small school to the third round of the tournament.

Homer Drew says that keeping roles separate is the most important advice he has for other parent-coaches. "Once your son steps onto the field, he's a member of a team and everybody is equal," he says. "Once he's off the field, he's your son again."

"Treat your child exactly like one of the group," adds Olympic speed-skating champion Dianne Holum, who coached her daughter, also an Olympian. "Don't reach out to them more or coach them more than the others. Your child will appreciate that."

Indeed, that is the cardinal rule of coaching your own child: Always treat your child the same way you treat the other children on the team.

Keeping roles separate also means resisting the temptation to use your child as your "assistant coach." If you need advice on strategy or lineup changes, talk to another parent (preferably a bona fide assistant coach), not your child.

DON'T BRING THE GAME HOME

Blurring of the line between parent and coach can create problems off the playing field, as well.

"Don't let the youngster's sports be the center of attention all the time," advises Bunker. If you and your daughter dominate the dinner-table conversation with sports talk, other family members may feel left out and resentful. Also, your daughter may begin to feel that sports are the center of your relationship with her.

"When you come home, remember you're a parent again," says Dianne Holum. "If your child is constantly getting coached, she won't like sports anymore."

Bunker suggests that you set guidelines, such as limiting questions during family time to those any parent would ask. For example, it's okay to ask "How does your knee feel today?" but not to discuss strategy for the next game.

Don't forget to give equal time to all your children. Parents who devote a lot of weekend time to a child athlete need to make time for their other children during the week. .

Another typical pitfall is when parents compare their experiences with their children's. Parents who coach their own kids were often once talented athletes. They must avoid comparing their children's achievement with their own.

TALK TO PLAYERS AND PARENTS

Your first official act as coach should be to hold a preseason team meeting for players and their parents. Use this opportunity to explain your expectations for the team and your philosophy regarding playing time and position assignments. Let them know that your philosophy is consistent with league rules and guidelines, and be sure it is. If, for example, your league requires players to play different positions throughout the season, make sure they do.

Acknowledge that your child is on the team, and make it clear that you plan to treat your child and every other team member the same way. Encourage parents to come to you immediately with questions or complaints.

“Ask for constructive feedback early on,” advises Bunker. If you don't, she says, it may be impossible to get it later, because resentment will have set in.

DON'T PLAY FAVORITES

At the youngest levels, treating all players fairly is not so difficult, because league rules usually mandate equal playing time and the emphasis is on fun. But when children reach the ages of 12 and 13 and sports become more competitive, “treating players equitably doesn't always mean treating them equally,” Bunker says. “In select leagues, weaker players are weeded out.”

Bunker recommends doing a “self test” after practices. Ask yourself, Was I objective about my child's performance? Did I control my emotional involvement? Did I spend as much time with the other children as I did with my own?

KEEP A SCORE SHEET

Because playing time is such a critical issue for parents, it's a good idea to keep a score sheet that records each child's playing time and positions. John Evans, a bookstore owner in Jackson, Mississippi, who coached his son Austin's Little League team for seven seasons, kept the stats for the team. He used those stats when he made his selections for the all-star team. “I had an objective tool,” says Evans. “The parents could examine the records.”

If you're too busy with coaching to keep the records yourself, enlist an assistant coach or fellow parent to help you.

DON'T SHORT-SHRIFT YOUR CHILD

Some parent-coaches find that, in an effort to appear evenhanded, they give their own children too little attention and praise. “Don't play favorites, but don't go the other way,” advises Steve Wulf, a magazine editor, who has coached his sons Bo, 12, and John, 8, since they were five years old. Wulf, like many other parent-coaches, has found this easier said than done.

“It's tricky, because other parents will automatically assume you're favoring your child when, in fact, you're doing just the opposite,” he says.

While Wulf expects his sons to set a good example on the field and off, he tries not to get upset if they don't. “It's very easy to take out team frustrations on your own son because you don't want to take it out on someone else's son,” he says.

Green Bay Packer quarterback Brett Favre recalls how being the coach's son often meant getting an earful. "If my dad wanted to chew out the team, he would chew me out first," says Favre.

Brooks Clark, a frequent contributor to SportsParents, who has coached his daughters, Isabelle, 11, and Olivia, 8, since kindergarten, agrees that it's important not to come down too hard on your own child because you think she should know better.

"A parent's words mean much more than a coach's words," says Clark. "When your daughter lets in the winning goal, you have to say, 'It's fine, don't worry.' The worse the screw-up, the more she needs your support."

Your child may also feel slighted because she doesn't have you all to herself. "When the father is supervisor and trying to give the kids equal time, it's difficult for a child to know that the father isn't favoring the other kids," says John Evans.

KNOW WHEN TO BOW OUT

Part of coaching your own child successfully is recognizing when to let go. "There's a time when someone else should coach your kid," says Clark. "You can teach your kid certain things, but you don't want her to start resisting you because you're her parent."

For example, Clark recalls that when he encouraged his daughter to practice her lay-ups, she reacted negatively, but when the coach of her all-star team told her to go home and shoot 50 lay-ups, she took it seriously.

Anne Vexler, a former gymnastics champion at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, now runs a gymnastics school there. She found that when her daughter Talya, a talented young gymnast, was 10, she could no longer coach her effectively.

"If kids want to be competing at a national level, you have to push them, sometimes hard," says Vexler. "In gymnastics, there's a fear factor. Kids gain confidence by learning to do something by themselves. Your instincts as a mom are conflicted with your job as a coach when you send your child to try her first back flip on the balance beam.

"It's hard enough to do a good job as a parent. Trying to be a coach, too, puts too much stress on the relationship," adds Vexler.

It's impossible to generalize about when it's time to stop coaching. Bunker recommends using your child as a barometer. "Does your youngster want to talk about sports on the way to and from practice?" she asks. "Or does she want to skip practice? [The latter is] usually a signal of unhappiness."

But Bunker also notes that all young athletes have periods of frustration, so parent-coaches need to avoid rushing to judgment.

"There's no single answer for when to stop and let someone else take over," says Vexler. "Some can keep coaching as their children get older. You need to know if you can continue or not and if you want to risk the relationship."

Of course, there are lots of longtime successful parent-child coaching duos to inspire you to take the job. But don't expect too much immediate appreciation from your child, cautions Evans. "Your coaching becomes a given for them," he says. "The things you try to teach them-morals and values-are learned as a process over time."

With thoughtful and careful coaching on your part-and a little bit of luck-you may end up with the best reward of all.

Says Evans, "You want them to look back on the experience ten or twelve years from now and say, 'Gosh, that was fun!' "

Liability

See the WYAL Player Signup Form on the WYAL web site

(http://www.wyal.us/content/wyalinfo/forms/wyal_player_signup_form.pdf)

Evaluation

See the WYAL Coaches Certification Form on the WYAL web site
(www.wyal.us/content/wyalinfo/forms/wyal_coach_certification_form.doc)

Coaches Clinic Test

1. When we grip a ball, we should hold the ball with:
 - a. Fingers together
 - b. Spread apart enough for two fingers to fit between
 - c. Spread apart enough for one finger to fit between
2. According to numbers on a clock, where should your index finger be if you are left handed?
 - a. 9:00
 - b. 1:00
 - c. 11:00
 - d. 3:00
3. You should hold the baseball how?
 - a. As tight as you can
 - b. As loose as you can
 - c. Squeezing the ball with your fingertips
 - d. Loosely with your fingers and thumb like an egg
4. If you want your ball to go straight you should:
 - a. Get your thumb at 6:00
 - b. Get your thumb at 7:00
 - c. Get your thumb at 5:00
5. Fielders should hold the ball:
 - a. With the seams
 - b. Across the seams
 - c. Without the seams
6. What is the first throwing drill?
 - a. Long lever
 - b. Short lever
 - c. Wrist snap
7. What is the second drill?
 - a. Long lever
 - b. Short lever
 - c. Wrist snap
8. What is the third drill?
 - a. Long lever
 - b. Short lever
 - c. Wrist snap
9. What are cue words for the short lever
 - a. Back, up, down
 - b. Sky, scratch, throw

10. When throwing to a teammate what part of your foot should be pointing at them if there was a laser attached to it?
 - a. Toes
 - b. Ankle, until you release the ball
11. What are the three different positions a fielder should do in the infield or outfield?
 - a. Relax, down, fielding
 - b. Relax, ready, fielding
12. After the infielder fields the ball, he should step in front of the arm-side foot or behind the arm-side foot?
 - a. In front
 - b. Behind
13. When running after a fly ball, the athlete should run:
 - a. Flat-footed
 - b. On toes
14. When hitting, you should line up your knocking knuckles.
 - a. True
 - b. False
15. In your batting stance, your head should have a slight tilt towards the plate.
 - a. True
 - b. False
16. The sequence in hitting is: load, pivot, swing.
 - a. True
 - b. False
17. When bunting the baseball, you should lower your bat by bending your knees for a low pitch.
 - a. True
 - b. False
18. When pitching, the ground by the rubber where you place your foot should be level.
 - a. True
 - b. False
19. After your reach balance position during pitching:
 - a. Hands move down first
 - b. Leg moves down first
 - c. Hands and leg go down together
20. Your lead arm mechanics after you throw the ball should:
 - a. Swing around your body
 - b. Pull the glove back to your heart

21. The three positions in catching are: signal, relaxed, and ready.
 - a. True
 - b. False
22. When base running, you should always find the base coaches for guidance.
 - a. True
 - b. False
23. When throwing the baseball from the outfield, you should always try to hit the cutoff.
24. Defense positioning can switch for every batter.
25. When turning a double play at second base a good feed is important.
26. When you are on defense in the relaxed position, you should be thinking, "What am I going to do with the ball when it is hit to me?"
27. During a squeeze bunt, you should only bunt strikes.
28. Coaches should instruct players to play catch in the infield to warm up.
29. List three safety concerns when designing a practice
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
30. List an example of a coach demonstrating good sportsmanship when s/he is on the field with her/his athletes.

Name: _____

Date: _____