

Pointers For Parents

Sports Parenting: How To Win, Even If The Team Loses

(NAPSA)—Why do 35 million U.S. children participate in organized youth sports each year? To start, sports give boys and girls an array of exciting “firsts”—the first game, the first big score and the first team victory. For every first win, however, there is also a child’s first big loss and the question that follows: How can I guide my child through the disappointment of defeat?

While such comforts as juice boxes and granola bars provide a good start, only an adult mentor can show a young athlete how even a 1 and 10 season can be full of fun memories and positive learning experiences.

“Rebounding from mistakes, overcoming disappointment, rallying oneself to prevail at next week’s game—these are the life lessons that youth sports provide,” says Jim Thompson, founder and executive director of Positive Coaching Alliance.

Thompson emphasizes that to ensure boys and girls absorb these lessons, participation by parents in a constructive and encouraging manner is crucial.

“Youth sports offer so many teachable moments that can enrich a child in the long run,” says Thompson. “When moms and dads successfully partner with their children’s coaches to put the game in healthy perspective, kids are more likely to view their sporting experience as positive.”

Here are some pointers from www.ResponsibleSports.com on what parents can do to keep the game rewarding for their children:

1. Emphasize attributes other than winning. Children can take games very seriously, but they quickly forget their disappointments and move on, showing that winning and losing isn’t everything. Take their cue. Point out their effort.



2. Establish an early positive relationship with the coach. It will be much easier to communicate later should a problem arise.

3. Fill the coach’s emotional tank—and your child’s. Just about every coach and player does a lot of things well. Take the time to look for those things and when you see something you like, let him or her know about it.

4. Don’t put the player in the middle. It’s much easier for a child to put his or her best effort forward if parents show support for the coach. If you have a concern, take it up with the coach privately.

5. Don’t give instructions during a game or practice. It can be extremely confusing to your child and distracting to other parents and fans to hear someone other than the coach yelling out instructions.

For more tips on mentoring, visit www.ResponsibleSports.com. While there, you can honor a youth sports coach by nominating him or her for a Liberty Mutual Responsible Coaching Award. Liberty Mutual celebrates coaches in all sports with \$250 grants to help offset the costs of running a youth team. You can also take the Responsible Sport Parenting course. By completing it on behalf of your child’s youth sports organization, you’ll help that organization compete for a chance to win a \$2,500 grant.