

## **Winning and Losing: Keeping a Sane Perspective**

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As parents, how many of us get more upset about our child's team losing than they do? Do we also revel in a win long after our children have forgotten what the outcome even was? Have you ever listened to teams during pregame warm-ups as they discuss their opponent of the day? Often you overhear comments like "Gee this team is really good, I hear they are undefeated" and both teams are saying this!

Game outcome is important, at least for a while but it doesn't really make a long lasting impression unless it is blown out of proportion. This isn't to say that children will enjoy losing or not be excited about winning. But in the end they should be most thrilled about having competed.

We need to remember why the children participate in youth sports. If you ask most children why they play sports, the answers won't include, "To learn about sportsmanship," "For the social aspects," or "That's the only way I'll ever get a scholarship." What most kids will tell you is that they play sports because it's fun and they get an opportunity to learn skills. As parents it is our responsibility to help create a positive sports environment for our children. You wouldn't want another parent putting your child down for making an error, why should you? Would you want to continue going to an activity that every time you made a mistake you were criticized? Do you like to be lectured after a long day at work about all the things you could have done better? Put yourself in your child's shoes.

Think about how you act at your children's games. Are you a self-designated sideline coach? The only person giving instructions to the players should be the head coach or the assistant coaches. We often forget (or have never experienced) what it's like playing in a competitive atmosphere. It's hard enough running, getting where you're supposed to be and playing your best, let alone having to listen to three different people yell three sets of instructions that you're not doing or should do (and usually never the same things). Next time you're going to yell something to your child, try yelling, "Good job, keep up the good work" and leave it at that. Hopefully the parents around you will follow your lead. I guarantee your child won't tell you after the game, "Jeez Dad/Mom, I missed you yelling instructions to me during the game."

Listen to post-game discussions. The most important thing to the kids after a game is likely to be what the snack was that day or where they are going after the game rather than who won or lost. You know what, kids are smarter than we think!

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