

A SPORTSMANSHIP MANUAL FOR YOUTH AND HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL
COACHES

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A SPORTSMANSHIP MANUAL FOR YOUTH AND HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL
COACHES

A Project

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Abstract
of
A SPORTSMANSHIP MANUAL FOR YOUTH AND HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL
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There is a current sportsmanship trend in our society which depicts a “win-at-all-costs” mentality by our parents, coaches and athletes. Many experts believe that this mentality is having a negative impact on the positive effects that organized sports can have on a young person. One study shows that approximately seventy percent of youth athletes will not participate in high school sports for various reasons, one of which being a lack of good sportsmanship practices by their coaches. Proper sportsmanship may not be an inherent trait in all young people; often times, good sportsmanship needs to be instilled by coaches and parents, and to do this effectively, coaches must be first trained on the techniques of providing a stable environment for sportsmanship to occur. Currently, there are programs and organizations that do offer sportsmanship training materials, but all at some type of monetary cost. Therefore, this project created a sportsmanship training manual for youth and high school football coaches on techniques for implementing proper sportsmanship teaching practices and every day drills into their programs that is designed to be of no cost, user friendly and time efficient.

_____, Committee Chair
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Date

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The positive physical, social and cognitive influences that organized sports can have on young people have been well documented over recent years (Phillips, 2007; Bailey, 2006). As the importance and demand for organized youth sports increases, poor sportsmanship among the participants, their parents and their coaches has also increased, often defeating one of the primary goals of physical education and organized sports, “the acquisition or betterment of social values by participants” (Green & Gabbard, 1999, p.99). Social researchers fear coaches of youth sports programs may have lost sight of this goal because winning the game has taken precedence over playing the sport. "When winning is everything the destination supersedes the journey, thus diminishing or negating the intrinsic rewards of sport participation" (Simon, 1983, p.25). This project will focus on the impact that coaches have on youth sportsmanship in the game of football, and provide a tool for instilling positive sportsmanship practices in their teachings. It will also facilitate the work for a head coach by providing a training tool for assistant coaches that is a simple and effective technique for teaching proper sportsmanship.

Need for the Study

There is currently a coaching trend in our country which depicts a “win-at-all-costs” mentality. Unfortunately, this type of mentality has often led to unethical and aggressive behaviors, which can have a negative destructive impact on the development and well being of young athletes and of society at large (Nucci & Young-Shim, 2005).

“It appears that, sportsmanship values are not being well communicated or practiced by young athletes. In its present form, the contribution that sports make to the development of sportsmanship values by young athletes is questionable. Consequently, unless something is done to improve the quality of sportsmanship education, the contribution that sport makes to the social development of athletes may be minimal in the area of sportsmanship” (Green & Gabbard, 1999, p. 100). One contributing factor to the lack of sportsmanship may be that there are few resources available to young volunteer coaches to help teach them how to properly coach sportsmanship. One sport where sportsmanship may be a challenge is with the game of football particularly because it is a highly volatile sport that is played with violence and intensity. Consequently, this type of sport may create an environment where sportsmanship can fall to the wayside due to the sear competitive drive of all involved, including players, coaches, and even parents.

There are organizations such as the California Interscholastic Federation and the Positive Coaching Alliance that are providing quality online courses, books and workshops (The Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011). These organizations clearly recognize a lack of sportsmanship practices in our youth athletics by providing these types of materials. However, all of their materials offered cost money, and as a result of needing to pay for the materials, many volunteer coaches may not be motivated to partake in a course about sportsmanship. Therefore, to facilitate the change in training for assistant coaches there appears to be a need for a more effective way providing this type of training through a cost free sportsmanship manual.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project is to create a manual designed to educate inexperienced football coaches in California about proper sportsmanship practices and techniques to young people ages eight to seventeen.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms will be used throughout the study. These terms will be defined in order to give the reader an understanding of how each term is being used. They are presented in a basic and elementary way, and they will be explained in more detail through the literature review and project itself.

Sportsmanship: Has generally been defined as the attitude and conduct which competitors display through their actions or words (Keating, 1978). “From another perspective, sportsmanship can be defined as conduct in sports whose characteristics include honesty, integrity, fairness, generosity, courtesy and graceful acceptance of results of competition” (Green & Gabbard, 1999). Feezell (1986) stated "Sportsmanship is a mean between excessive seriousness, which misunderstands the importance of the play-spirit, and an excessive amount of playfulness, which might be called frivolity and which misunderstands the importance of victory and achievement when play is competitive" (p. 10).

Head Coach aka “manager of the team”: “The member of the coaching staff that is responsible for all aspects of the team and is in charge of all other coaches” (about.com).

Delimitations

The following restrictions will be applied to this projects research and development: This project's research interviews were conducted with high school coaches from Northern California and there was a small sample size. The participants are restricted to youth and high school football coaches that instruct players from the ages of eight to seventeen.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this project is to create a manual for youth and high school football coaches in California to use as a guide for teaching proper sportsmanship to today's youth athletes. This chapter will begin with an assessment of what sportsmanship is as defined by the literature. It will then examine the benefits organized sports can have on a young athlete. Next, a discussion of society's current state of sportsmanship, including the coaches' and parent's mentalities and influences they may have on their youth athletes' experiences. Also, this chapter will also consider the types of techniques coaches can use to effectively teach good sportsmanship. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a discussion of the various training materials states provide their youth coaches to teach proper sportsmanship.

What is Sportsmanship?

There are a number of ways in which sportsmanship has been defined in the literature; as an expression of moral ideals of sport (Shea 1978); as the display of courtesy, citizenship, and the development of character; as the attitude and conduct which competitors display through their actions or words (Green & Gabbard, 1999); and as conduct in sports whose characteristics such as honesty, integrity, fairness, generosity, courtesy and graceful acceptance of results of competition (Green & Gabbard, 1999). Sportsmanship meant playing by the rules and treating an opponent with respect (Allison, 1982). "Sportsmanship is a mean between excessive seriousness, which misunderstands the importance of the play-spirit, and an excessive amount of playfulness, which might be

called frivolity and which misunderstands the importance of victory and achievement when play is competitive" (Feezell, 1986 p. 10).

Two common themes throughout all these definitions are cooperation and competition. Cooperation is when athletes play the game fairly and with respect for each other and for coaches. It is also important that the coaches cooperate with players and parents fairly and effectively. Competition needs to be present for sportsmanship to flourish because competition is the ingredient that makes organized sports different from free play and other leisure activities. Typically, competition is the catalyst for poor sportsmanship due to the increase in emotions. Without competition or cooperation, sportsmanship would not be necessary. "When winning becomes so important, competition goes beyond the rules of fairness and becomes conflict" (Green and Gabbard, 1999). It is a coach's responsibility to properly teach the essence of sportsmanship so the laurels of winning does not become more important than the basic fundamentals of sportsmanship.

The Benefits of Youth Sports

Research in the area of youth sports indicate there are many objectives for youth sports such as the development of sports skills, cooperation among players, a sense of achievement, a healthy self image, paying attention, leadership skills, teaching discipline, the values of society, sportsmanship, allowing for emotional expression, and having fun (Strong, 1992, Green and Gabbard, 1999, Seefeldt & Ewing, 1997). These objectives are filled with terms that epitomize good sportsmanship. Following these objectives and practicing good sportsmanship can have a lasting affect on a young athlete allowing young athletes to enjoy the sport they are playing, which in turn, may motivate them to

continue playing the sport throughout their adolescent years. In addition, prolonged participation in youth sports may also have a drastic positive impact on an individual's health and their moral make up as an adult. Therefore, a direct relationship may be present between good sportsmanship techniques and practice, with a young athlete's physical and moral development (Seefeldt & Ewing, 1997).

The Social Benefits of Youth Sports

A young person's social skills can be greatly influenced by their participation in youth organized sports. Research suggest that sports may teach youth how to work as part of a team, develop social skills with other children and adults (such as taking turns and sharing playing time), teaches both how to manage success and disappointment, and how to respect others, as well as benefit developmentally in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (American Sport Education Program, 1994, Zaichkowsky, 2006). Zaichkowsky (2006) stated that, "most educational leaders believe students who participate in school sports benefits can include such skills as, developing individual and team goals, meeting deadlines, working as a team, and learning to perform under pressure." Nucci and Young-Shim (2005) suggest that socialization by way of participating in sports may also provide a type of microcosm for being a part of one's society and the development of skills used when living within a society.

Sport can also have an impact on limiting deviant behavior. Youth sports have the potential to have a profound impact on adolescents in the areas of delinquency and aggression. Youth sports can be a deterrent against negative behavior such as gang involvement, especially since youth sports are highly enticing to gang members (Seefeldt

& Ewing, 1997). However, positive social development may not be the only benefit of participating in organized sports. Participating in sports can have a great physical benefit for a young person.

The Physical Benefits of Youth Sports

Regular participation in organized sports can have a great impact on an adolescent's health and fitness while they are participating, and it teaches them lessons about healthy lifestyles that they use for the rest of their lives. The Center for Disease Control (2009) suggests that such physical benefits derived from being involved in sports are improved strength and endurance, stronger bones and muscles, weight control, reduction of anxiety and stress, increased self-esteem and may even improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels (Seefeldt & Ewing, 1997). Sports participation can also build an appreciation of personal health and fitness and develops a positive self-image which may be maintained throughout adulthood (American Sport Education Program 1994). The direct result of all of the physical benefits that organized sports offer to participants may have a drastic impact on the critical rate of childhood obesity for children in the United States (Center for Disease Control, 2009).

The current rate of childhood obesity for ages 6-11 is 15%, which is an increase of 54% over the past 40 years, while a rate of 15.5% for children 12-19 represents an increase of 40%. As well as, obesity relates directly to Type II diabetes which, in 70% of the cases, results from excess weight (Wells, Ellis, Paisley & Banning, 2005). Two of the main causes that the Center for Disease Control (CDC) attributes to the rise in childhood obesity are a lack of physical activity and a rise in sedentary lifestyles (Childhood

Obesity, 2009). Participation in sports may very well provide the needed elements for meeting this issue by providing children opportunities to be physically active and move away from the other types of sedentary life activities. Wells, Ellis, Paisley & Banning (2005) suggest that creating physically active experiences that are enjoyable for youth may encourage them to continue a physically active lifestyle as an adult.

The previous research would suggest that organized youth sports may have the potential to positively affect an adolescent's social and physical well being. With the benefits of sports being so great, it is discouraging to see the current state of poor sportsmanship that is exuded by the players, parents and coaches in today's organized youth sports.

The Current State of Sportsmanship

Poor sportsmanship is becoming a serious and growing problem in youth sports today. Unpleasant experiences that follow from incidents involving poor sportsmanship may cause adolescents to drop out of organized sports. Poor sportsmanship is also leading to dropout rates approaching alarming levels in youth organized sports. Currently, out of 20 million participants each year, 70% will quit before they reach age 13 (Arthur-Banning, Wells, Baker & Hegreiness, 2009). "Almost half of all youth sports participants (45.3%) report they have been yelled at or insulted; 21% have been pressured to play while injured; 17% have been hit, kicked or slapped; and 8% have been pressured to intentionally harm another" (Wells, Ellis, Paisley & Banning, 2005, p. 2). This trend in youth sports may be growing because there is a shift in philosophy from our society's

parents and coaches away from teaching the spirit of the game for the enjoyment of playing to a win at all cost mentality.

A “win-at-all-cost” philosophy may be leading to unethical and aggressive behaviors, negatively impacting the development and well being of young athletes which can have an impact on society at large (Nucci & Young-Shim, 2005). While sports have the potential to lead children toward healthy physical and moral development, in reality, both positive and negative experiences are common results of youth sports participation (Wells, Ellis, Paisley & Banning, 2005, 2). “A 1983 survey of the American public found 85% of respondents believe youth sports may be influencing children to place too much value on winning and not enough on physical and psychological development” (Strong, 1992). There are daily accounts of parents and coaches who act out of control at youth sporting events, which can directly affect the attitude of the young athletes who are participating (Arthur-Banning, Wells, Baker & Hegreiness, 2009). According to Engh (2002), children are specialized in sports earlier, playing all year long, and experiencing significant pressure from parents and coaches to perform at a higher level than ever before. This may lead to increased intensity and a desire to win at an early age, as well as cause an athlete to “burn out” on a sport which can cause them to discontinue participating in athletics.

The Parents Impact

Though the coach of a team may have an impact on a player’s level of cooperation and competition in a sport, it is a child’s parents who appear to have the most significant impact on her/his sportsmanship. A parent’s influence on a child’s attitude or opinion on

a certain topic or issue cannot be underestimated. Literature in this area shows how significant individuals in an individual's life (such as a parent or a coach) have a great impact on his/her behavior, for example, smoking (Goddard, 1992; Flay et al., 1994; Jackson & Henriksen, 1997), alcohol consumption (Yu & Perrine, 1997), and pro-social and anti-social behaviors (Stuart & Ebbeck, 1995; Wyatt & Carlo, 2002; and Wells, Baker & Hegreness, 2009). Parents who demonstrate negative behaviors, such as obscene or offensive actions during a contest towards a coach, athlete or another parent, may send a message that this type of behavior is acceptable and that good sportsmanship and cooperation with the spirit of the game is not a priority. Fortunately, this trend of negative, non-sportsmanship behaviors can be inverted. Coaches can keep an open line of communication with parents to try and prevent these actions. For example, pre season meetings with parents that explain the coaching staff's stance on player discipline and playing time guidelines, and adding a signed behavior contracts can be effective in limiting parent interference (Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011).

Research has indicated that sport programs, if planned appropriately, can have an impact on increasing positive and decreasing negative sportsmanship among players (Arthur-Banning, Wells, Baker & Hegreness, 2009). The head coach is the key figure who can plan and execute proper sportsmanship practices within their team as well as with their athlete's parents.

A Coaches Role in Sportsmanship

Sportsmanship is a skill just like any other type of skill learned in the game of football and should be taught, drilled and instilled everyday through coaching athletes.

There is a common misconception in our country today that sportsmanship is inherently learned through the participation in organized sports, but research would suggest that this is not the case. A coach can have the ultimate power to influence a player or team's attitude about the game, including diminishing the "win at all cost" attitude may be beginning to prevail in our society (Nucci & Young-Shim, 2005). Despite popular belief, winning is frequently a low priority for adolescents participating in organized sports. Most children, instead, tend to value fun as both a motive and benefit of sport participation (Jennings, 2008). Overall, participants reported higher levels of fun when the game was close. This suggest that making an effort to promote sportsmanship and to balance the skills and ability levels of teams may be critical components to fun, which will lead to continued participation. Regardless of age or competition level, individuals typically choose to take part in an activity in which they experience fun (Wells, Ellis, Paisley & Banning, 2005). It is the coaches' responsibility to create fun and fair competition among their team to ensure their players are having an optimal experience. There are a number of ways that coaches can begin to instill proper sportsmanship with their players. First, ensuring everyone has fun would make learning all aspects of the game more enjoyable and rewarding. Sport activities should be designed to facilitate cooperation rather than just competition so that youth learn about fair play. Also, teach participants the rules of the game and make sure that everyone associated with the team abides by those rules at all times. Second, encourage and support all players on a team, as well as treat officials, coaches, players, teammates, and opponents with respect and avoid ridicule and sarcasm. Use teachable moments from the game to teach about being

a good sport, and make sure there are consequences when poor sportsmanship is displayed. Third, provide examples of good sportsmanship such as shaking hands with the opponent at the end of the game and praising an official's decision (Ramsburg, 1998).

Current Sportsmanship Materials for Coaches

Sportsmanship manuals are created by many states high school activities associations, and if used properly can, be an advantage for coaches in teaching proper sportsmanship; however, it is unclear to whom these manuals are created for. Many of the manuals such as Texas, Alabama, Nebraska and Indiana seemed to be geared toward school administrators who are then supposed to relay the information from the manual to the coaches. For example, the Alabama High School Athletic Association produces a sportsmanship manual that has a code of conduct for athletes and coaches, the roles of officials, public address rules and guidelines and suggestions for parents of athletes. The material is also broad and encompasses all high school sports. High School Athletic Directors must effectively pass the information to the coaches, who then must enforce the rules and policies with their athletes and parents (Alabama High School Athletic Association Sportsmanship Manual). Almost no state provides a sports specific, user friendly manual, designed directly for coaches that explain the importance of sportsmanship to their athletes; however, California does require coaches to be formally certified by an independent agency when they begin coaching high school athletics.

The California Interscholastic Federation

The California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) governs all high school athletic functions held in the State of California. The CIF is one of the few state ran

organizations that requires a person to pass a certification course before he or she can coach a sport. There are three different courses that potential coaches can pass in order to become certified. The NFHS “Fundamentals of Coaching” Course, the ASEP “Coaching Principles” and the ASEP “CIF Coaching Orientation” courses meet California’s standards for Coaching Education. In theory, this requirement should help counter poor sportsmanship practices. However, each class costs coaches \$52 to \$59 dollars to partake in, which for a volunteer coach can be discouraging (California Interscholastic Federation, 2011). There are also a few “loop holes” in the CIF’s policy. New coaches do not need to be certified in their first year. With volunteer coaches coming and going at their convenience, it can get very difficult for the CIF to maintain records for each team, therefore, the responsibility falls on the head coach to make sure his team is compliant. Also, with the educational courses being completely on-line based, the integrity of the program may be compromised due to the fact that the CIF has no way of knowing if that coach actually completed the course. California is one of the few states that are taking steps to ensure their high school coaches are properly trained; however, youth football coaches can make the largest impact in our sport, still do not have any training requirements. “Research shows that 70 to 75 percent of children who play sports will have quit playing by the time they are 14” (Jennings, 2008). Youth quit for several reasons including a heavy emphasis placed on winning, and a dislike for the coach’s behavior. This may indicate that more attention and programs should be geared toward the lower levels of sport to ensure that youth athletes choose to participate in high school

athletics and take full advantage of the positive impact that sports can have on an adolescent (Jennings, 2008).

The Positive Coaching Alliance

One of the finest resources for obtaining proper sportsmanship training materials that coaches have today is the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA). The PCA was created by Executive Director Jim Thompson in 1998 as a non-profit within Stanford University. This non-profit organization provides coaches with tools that help them encourage and support their athletes through positive sportsmanship practices. “In face-to-face group workshops, dynamic PCA Trainers train youth and high school sports coaches to become a Double-Goal Coach, whose first goal is winning the game, and the second, often more significant goal, is teaching life lessons through sports (Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011). The PCA also provides high quality sportsmanship materials for parents, coaches and youth athletes. Famous sports figures serve as spokespersons for the PCA, including LA Lakers Head Basketball Coach, Phil Jackson and NFL Hall of Fame Safety, Ronnie Lott. The Positive Coaching Alliance provides informative books, courses and messages to youth and high school coaches; however, their online course and books can be costly. Much of the material that the PCA used is focused around a new coaching style called the player-centered approach.

The Player-Centered Approach

Rugby, football’s close cousin and the game from which it was originally descended from, has adopted this new style of coaching called the player-centered approach. In doing so, USA Rugby has partnered with the Positive Coaching Alliance to

help implement the philosophies and teaching tactics that are part of this new coaching style (S. Gray, personal communication, May 5, 2011). The player centered approach is a contrast to the traditional coach centered approach. This new style emphasizes the need to give players autonomy to make their own decisions during games and practice (de Souza & Oslin, 2008). The player-centered approach has clear intentions to empower athletes to make their own choices, which can result in the development of higher levels of motivation, as an individual and as a team. Players also learn to develop solutions designed to enhance their game performance. This style may increase player engagement, better communication; improve strategic competence and motivation to perform (Sheridan, 2009). According to de Souza and Oslin (2008) “Strategic, tactical, physical, social, and emotional skills all affect game performance and athletes are able to develop these better when they are given autonomy to develop game solutions” (p. 24).

Steven Gray, a USA Rugby coach, has been pleased with the results that have been generated by the player-centered approach (S. Gray, personal communication, May 5, 2011). With Rugby being the most similar sport to football, it is not out of the question that this coaching style could be affective for football coaches as well. Unlike the previously mentioned manuals and courses, this is a style of coaching that is cost free and can be easily implemented by head coaches.

Closing

The lack of sportsmanship in youth athletics continues to increase; therefore, in order to evoke a true change in the training of our youth sports coaches, the head coaches may need to mandate that their assistants be educated and trained in proper sportsmanship.

Perhaps the most effective way to do this is with a cost free and user friendly sportsmanship manual that will allow them to properly teach good sportsmanship to their players and in doing so, make their players experience in organized sports a fun and memorable one.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the methods employed to create the most effective manual for the instruction of proper sportsmanship techniques for youth and high school football coaches. This chapter includes a description of sampling procedures that were conducted to assist in the creation of a manual for volunteer inexperienced coaches. It will also examine other existing manuals from other parts of the United States, as well as literature about proper sportsmanship practices and how it will be used in the creation of a manual that is simple, time efficient and easy for coaches to follow and understand.

Sampling

Prior to creating the sportsmanship manual for youth and high school football coaches, “informal conversational” interviews were conducted with high school head and assistant football coaches in order to gather some preliminary information regarding the need for this type of training material. Informal Conversational interviews are unstructured conversations where there is no fixed set of questions or interview guide and information received is open to the direction of the conversation with the interviewee (Henderson & Bialeschki, 2002).

There were approximately 13 coaches from various high schools in Northern California who participated in these informal interviews. The interviews took place at the Max Miller Clinic of Champions football coaches’ clinic, most were approximately ten

minutes in length. Generally the interviews begin with some type of opening statement, such as “What do you know about sportsmanship?” or “What type of sportsmanship training have you had?” No formal data analysis was conducted on the information gathered. However, there were three overarching main points that did emerge from these conversations, 1) teaching sportsmanship is important, 2) the sportsmanship training courses required by the CIF are often lengthy, costly, and sometimes more frustrating than informative, and 3) most of the interviewees think they are doing a good job of teaching sportsmanship without training materials.

The overall response to the term “sportsmanship” was that it is a “very important” component of coaching the youth of today. This response is indicative of the emphasis that organizations, such as the CIF and the Positive Coaching Alliance, have put on teaching proper sportsmanship to our youth, including the required courses and the celebrity spokespersons that represent positive coaching. For example, one interviewee said that, “sportsmanship has become more and more important each year, and I feel it is a good thing. We need to preserve the integrity of our great sport for future generations.”

Although there was a strong sense of importance for sportsmanship, most of the interviewees felt that the CIF’s required sportsmanship training courses were costly, lengthy and for the most part, could have been done in a much more effective manner, such as a short concise manual that could be read from home. Due to the length of the course, many coaches felt frustrated to the point where they were no longer getting any information that was being provided by the instructor. As one interviewee stated, “the workshop was the biggest waste of a single day. The schools administrator gave them the

answers to the test at the end, so I just sat there all day and did not listen.... a Power Point that is a condensed version of the workshop would be much more affective because it would get right to the point.”

However, many of the interviewees thought they already understand the important concepts pertaining to sportsmanship. Therefore, they thought they were already implementing proper sportsmanship coaching practices and sportsmanship training courses were not necessary. Many believed as one if the interviewee’s who claimed, “We do a good job of promoting sportsmanship now, without training.”

Though the interviewees thought sportsmanship training is important, they had strong opinions against the CIF’s required sportsmanship training courses. They felt the courses were lengthy and ineffective, and the majority of them felt they already implemented good sportsmanship practices within their teams without the help of the courses. However, the literature suggests there is a lack of good sportsmanship being taught to the youth of America as a whole. Therefore, it would seem reasonable that a simple and effective sportsmanship training manual would be a valuable tool for teaching youth and high school football coaches’ techniques to instill good sportsmanship in their player’s and to explain the benefits that good sportsmanship can have on their team.

Chapter 4

IMPLEMENTATION

Due to the research data discussed in previous chapters, combined with the personal interviews conducted with high school football coaches and my own personal experiences as a player and coach, I feel there is a disconnect between the training the CIF is requiring coaches to partake in, and what they are actually learning and retaining in regards to sportsmanship. As mentioned previously, the CIF's coaching certification process has many loop holes such as; only second year coaches must be certified and some head coaches may not report certain volunteer coaches to the CIF. This leads me to question, what about first year coaches? Do they not impact student athletes as much as a veteran coach? It would seem logical to state that they would need to most information and training.

The CIF's required courses manly focus on injury prevention, risk awareness, first aid training and touches briefly on sportsmanship practices. With this limited amount of sportsmanship training, the data would suggest that poor sportsmanship is still exhibited by coaches in football today. I feel that this manual will give head football coaches one more tool to train their volunteer coaches in their first year. This manual will give the head coach the understanding that everyone on his/her staff has been properly trained because they personally gave them a sportsmanship specific manual to review.

This manual is unique because it is specific to the game of football, using specific examples and tactics that are for the game of football. The manual begins with an overview of what sportsmanship is, followed by the current state of sportsmanship in our

society in an attempt to capture the reader's attention. It then covers coaching tactics and techniques to implement proper sportsmanship within their players.

In using this manual, head football coaches should require their assistant coaches to partake in the Positive Coaching Alliance "Double-Goal Coach" course within their first two years of coaching. This will ensure the material in the manual is thoroughly covered by a profession who can answer any additional questions the coaches may have, as well as encourage personal interaction.

Chapter 5

THE MANUAL

**SPORTSMANSHIP
TRAINING
MANUAL FOR
YOUTH AND HIGH
SCHOOL
FOOTBALL
COACHES**



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



A NEW GENERATION OF YOUTH

Do you remember your childhood? Do you remember going outside to play with your friends until the sun went down and your mom called you in for dinner? Well those times are coming to an end. We are ushering in a new generation; a generation of social networkers, video game players and reality television watchers. Lost is the art of free that stimulates the imagination and their physical fitness. Kids today are becoming more reliant on artificial technology driven entertainment which may have a dramatic effect on their physical activity and social skills.

Organized sports may be the last line of defense against a new completely sedentary youth lifestyle. However, there is a factor sabotaging our efforts to keep our youth involved in sports, *poor sportsmanship*. A "win at all costs" mentality by coaches, parents and players may be corrupting our great sport of football. It is our job as coaches to uphold the basic integrity of the game, so our kids can benefit from the lessons and skills football teaches, such as physical fitness, communication, discipline, punctuality and dedication to a greater cause.

SECTION I: WHAT IS SPORTSMANSHIP?

"It takes a lifetime to build a reputation, but only
a second to lose it"
(Saban & Curtis, 2005, p. 186).

WHAT IS SPORTSMANSHIP?

Before we examine the effects poor sportsmanship can have on a young athlete, and the importance of our role as coaches in protecting the integrity and character of our great game, let's first understand exactly what is considered sportsmanship...

"Conduct (as fairness, respect for one's opponent, and graciousness in winning or losing) becoming to one participating in a sport" (Sportsmanship, 2011).

"Sportsmanship became the term which was used to express the moral ideals for sport" (Shea, 1978, p. 4).

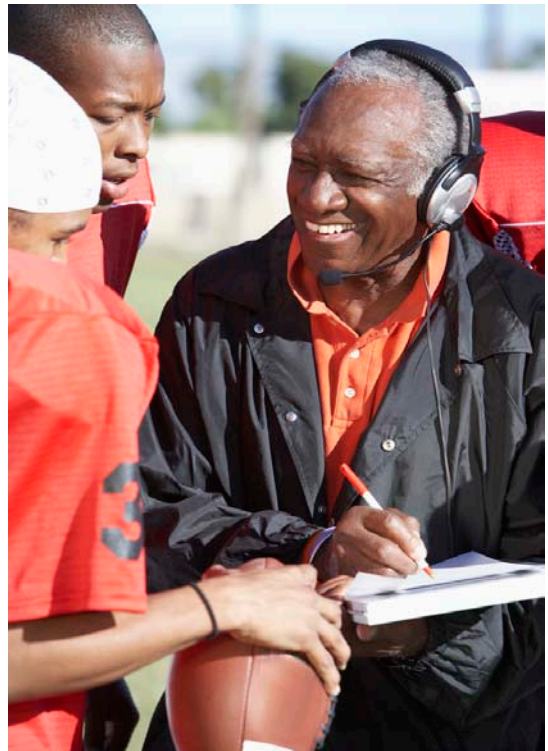
"The attitude and conduct which competitors display through their actions or words" (Green & Gabbard, 1999).

"Poor sportsmanship is when winning becomes so important; competition goes beyond the rules of fairness and becomes conflict" (Green & Gabbard, 1999).

WHAT IS SPORTSMANSHIP?

In summary, sportsmanship is the intended attitude and conduct that the game was meant to be played with. It is playing fairly and safely within the rules, respecting one's opponent and above all, enjoying participating in the chosen sport.

As coaches, it is our job to teach proper sportsmanship to our players. Good sportsmanship may not be an inherent trait in our highly competitive and physical sport. Therefore, it is critical that we teach our youth, at the youngest age possible, good sportsmanship habits to take with them throughout the rest of their life.



SECTION II: WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

What is the first question a person asks children when they see they're wearing a sports uniform?

"Did you win?" (Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

In society today, there is currently a strong “win at all costs” mentality that seems to be taking over youth and high school sports. This coaching and parenting style negates much of the positive impact sports can have on our young athletes (Nucci & Young-Shim, 2005).

Let's look at some current statistics that reflect the effects of poor sportsmanship.

Out of 20 million participants each year, 70% will quit before they reach age 13 *(Arthur-Banning, Wells, Baker & Hegreness, 2009)*

Poor sportsmanship is not the only factor that contributes to low participation rates; however, the following statistics will show it may be one of the main reasons.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- 8% have been pressured to intentionally harm another
- 17% have been hit, kicked or slapped
- 21% have been pressured to play while injured
- 45.3% of all youth sports participants report they have been yelled at or insulted

(Wells, Ellis, Paisley & Banning, 2005, p. 2)

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Research shows that youth's self-concept (self-esteem) can be defined by three dimensions

1. Cognitive = Primarily school or academic performance
2. Social = Popularity with peers and friendship networks
3. Physical appearance/body image = self-perceived athletic skills and participation in sports (Jackson et al., 2009)

As coaches, we have the opportunity to positively affect two out of the three dimensions that kids use to create their self-concept. Whether we like it or not, we are their leader and role model, and for most coaches, this is why we choose to sacrifice our time; to make a positive impact on the lives of our players. However, previous statistics reveal that we may be failing as a society in teaching the proper values of sports to our youth; the change must begin with us, their role models.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Due to the decline of participation in youth organized sports, caused in part by coaches and parents displaying poor sportsmanship, children are reverting back to a more sedentary, indoor lifestyle. This lifestyle has been a leading cause of the rise in childhood obesity.

➤ Effects of Childhood Obesity

- 17 % of children and adolescents ages 2-19 years are obese
- Obese children = Obese adults...
- Physically active children are physically active adults.
- Daily participation in P.E. in school has dropped 14% over the last 13 years
- Amount of time with media may be to blame?



- \$7.7 BILLION spent on obesity in California in 2003

(A growing problem, 2011)

**SECTION III:
TEACHING PROPER
SPORTSMANSHIP**

RESPONSIBLE COACHING

The contradictory coaching style to the win-at-all-costs approach is a style that professionals call "Responsible Coaching."

Responsible Coaching actually is more difficult, challenging and rewarding than coaching with a win-at-all-cost approach.

Responsible coaches are committed to:

- Ensuring player safety
- Placing education and character development *before* wins
- Coaching beyond the "X's and O's"
- Coaching athletes to master their sports
- Lifting players emotional spirits to improve performance and instill love of sport
- Living and coaching by a code of Honoring the Game



(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

RESPONSIBLE COACHING

The best coaches build opportunities for character education into their program, creating, recognizing and capitalizing on teachable moments. Think about the following questions when it comes to your players:

- *If they fail, will they try again?*
- *Do they have the character necessary to persist?*
- *Will they be committed to helping to make their teammates better?*
- *How can I encourage them to have the confidence and curiosity to ask for and welcome feedback?*
- *When they succeed, do they rest on their laurels?*
- *Do they seek help to refine their skills even further?*
- *Will they compete in a way that makes their coaches, families and themselves proud?*

(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

RESPONSIBLE COACHING

In sports, character is constantly tested. Therefore, Responsible Coaches are character educators, able to take advantage of the endless procession of teachable moments that sports provide. Beyond the X's and O's, Responsible Coaches teach athletes life lessons in persistence, teamwork, sacrifice, effort, empathy, discipline, leadership and overcoming adversity.

Teaching our players to be better at their sport is rewarding, but not nearly as rewarding as feeling that we've actually helped shape the values they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

"There isn't any other youth institution that equals sports as a setting in which to develop character. There just isn't. Sports are the perfect setting because character is tested all the time."

- John Gardner



(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

THE MASTERY APPROACH

Society tends to put scoreboard results ahead of everything else. Responsible Coaches care about the scoreboard, but they care even more deeply about instilling a "Mastery" approach in their athletes, instead of a win-at-all-costs approach.

A simple way to remember the three keys to the Mastery approach is the acronym, *ELM = Effort, Learning and Mistakes*:

1. Effort -- always give 100%
2. Learning -- improve constantly as you gain more knowledge
3. Mistakes are OK -- mistakes are how we learn

Coaches that only focus on the scoreboard may increase their player's anxiety. Higher anxiety causes them to make more mistakes because they play tentatively and timidly. Ultimately, anxiety undercuts self-confidence, which affects performance and takes the joy out of sports.

Sports psychology research shows that teams and athletes who take the ELM Mastery approach (giving 100% effort, constantly learning, and bouncing back from mistakes) consistently win more contests. By moving your team's focus off their scoreboard results and on to their effort, you'll have happier, more self-confident players, and the wins will be the outcome.

(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

TOOLS TO TEACH THE MASTERY APPROACH

Here are some tools that can help your youth players focus on what they can control.

Effort Habit Goals

Effort goals are more under your players' control (if they are working hard) than outcome goals. Set effort goals in addition to outcome goals (i.e., making at least one reception in each a game or scoring a touchdown). In this way, over time, if players achieve the effort goals, they will move toward achieving desired outcome goals as well (Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011).

Weekly Rewards

After each game, recognize one or more players who worked very hard or who completed an "unsung activity" that you want to see more of, such as running receiving routes hard all the way, even as the quarterback's second or third option. Make sure the reward is symbolic (not money or something that is of value in and of itself). Some coaches give out game balls or t-shirts. A simple t-shirt can go a long way toward enhancing a player's confidence.

(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

TOOLS TO TEACH THE MASTERY APPROACH

Team Mistake Ritual

A player's mistake must be corrected and repeated mistakes must have a consequence. Many of us can remember being punished by our coaches growing up; it was part of the game. However, there are right and wrong ways to correct a player's mistakes. The following are some examples of how to properly discipline a player.

1. Let them decide on fair punishments for mistakes such as being late to practice, not attending practice, turnovers, ect. The team will then have a sense of ownership in the punishment and be more accepting of the consequences these mistakes bring.
2. Make sure all coaches are on the same page and follow the punishment the team chooses.
3. Avoid embarrassing the player by singling them out in front of the team. Pull them aside and explain to them what he did wrong and how to fix it.

Remember, mistakes are OK. They are how we learn. Avoid instilling fear in a player because it will paralyze their ability to play the game quickly. By coaching positively, we can keep our players confidence high.

(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

PLAYER-CENTERED APPROACH

During game play, the athlete is ultimately responsible for discovering and assessing game needs, solving problems, and responding with appropriate decisions and skills. Traditionally, the coach takes the responsibility of assessing the game problems and formulating solutions.



The player-centered approach to coaching and teaching football is a contrast to a coach-centered approach.

Player-centered coaching emphasizes the need to give players autonomy to make their own decisions both in games and in practice. "Strategic, tactical, physical, social, and emotional skills all affect game performance, and athletes are able to develop better when they are given autonomy to develop game-play solutions that enhance their performance."

(de Souza & Oslin, 2008, p.24)

PLAYER-CENTERED APPROACH

Current research reports the following four benefits from the player-centered approach:

1. Increased player engagement. Players who are encouraged to partake in the decision making process tend to take ownership of their performance.
2. Increased communication. In order to properly implement this coaching style, good communication between players and coaches must be present. This may carry over into game play.
3. Increased competence. Players who take part in their learning and the teaching of others tend to retain the information more effectively and feel more confident in their performance.
4. Increased motivation. Increased competence is associated with increased motivation. A player's sense of ownership may increase their motivation to practice the skills that are needed to succeed in the game.

(de Souza & Oslin, 2008)

TOOLS TO BECOMING A PLAYER-CENTERED COACH

The most common misconception about the player-centered approach by coaches is that coaches have no control over their team and all they do is roll out that ball and have the players coach themselves. This is not true. It is your job as a coach to guide them through the process of solving their problems and to establish an environment in which players share responsibility for their individual and team performance.

If you are a coach-centered coach by nature, do not try to shift to a player-centered coach overnight.

You may become frustrated and

impatient with the process. This shift takes time and planning.

Experts suggest the following steps in transitioning:

1. Provide a positive (safe) environment;
2. Encourage player input;
3. Make time for it to happen.



(Sheridan, 2009)

TOOLS TO BECOMING A PLAYER-CENTERED COACH

Here are a few more ideas for implementing the player-centered approach:

1. Encourage and positively receive feedback
2. Use “How” and “Why” questions to encourage critical thinking such as;
 - “How can we improve the speed of your first step?”
 - “Why do you think you threw that interception?”
3. Use “what”, “where”, or “when” questions to support technique development such as;
 - “What foot should you plant with on a slant route?”
 - “Where should you hand be on a drive block?”
 - “When would you use a spin move on a pass rush?”

Whether you decide to use the Mastery Approach or become a Player-centered coach, the following are tools and techniques, many player-centered in nature, to keep your players confidence high.

(Sheridan, 2009)

KEEP THE CONFIDENCE HIGH

Now let's look at some ways to coach with a positive attitude to avoid bringing down the confidence of your players.

So how can a coach keep a players confidence high?

Find the right balance between specific, truthful praise and specific, constructive criticism. Educational research indicates a "Magic Ratio" of 5:1, five praises to one criticism, which fosters the ideal learning environment.



Avoid empty, unearned praise. Remember, the praise must be truthful and specific (i.e., not "Way to go," but, "I'm glad to see you kept your hands high for that catch." or "Great double team on the nose guard!"

(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

KEEP THE CONFIDENCE HIGH

Also be aware of your non-verbal communication as it too should follow the “magic ratio.” You can positively affect a player’s confidence when you listen, nod, clap, or smile.

On the other hand, you can drain a player’s confidence by ignoring players, frowning, head-shaking, eye-rolling and yelling.

Keeping a player’s confidence high can be a challenge, especially when certain player’s do not play very much.

Remember you can praise players for ways they support the team from the bench (constant positive chatter, pointing out something your opponent is doing to help a teammate on the field, etc.).

Just as poor sportsmanship can have a negative effect on your team’s attitude; this type of positive reinforcement will spread throughout your team and will breed success. Developing this positive atmosphere may be the most valuable and important job you have as a coach.

(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

KEEP THE CONFIDENCE HIGH

The following are just a few examples provided by the Positive Coaching Alliance on how to positively encourage your players with great feedback that is meaningful.

- *John is a receiver. "John, great route! Receivers, look here. John runs each and every route like he's going to get the ball even if he knows he's the 3rd or 4th option. He's getting off the line hard, accelerating out of his breaks, and is looking back for the ball. That's how we do it here!"*
- *Felix is a quarterback. "Felix, that's the way to lead on the field! At the line of scrimmage you're projecting your voice so the whole offense can hear. It's inspiring confidence in your teammates, and it's letting the defense know they'll soon have eleven men coming at 'em."*
- *"Greg, you're exploding off the line on every play. I see you opening big holes for our backs. Nice work."*
- *"Devon, I can always find you because you're the one clapping and keeping our team energized. Keep it up."*
- *"When we needed a big block, I knew I could count on Isaac. He got low, moved his feet, and exploded into the defender and finished his block. That's the way to do it!"*

(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

TOOLS FOR POSITIVE COACHING

The following are just a few tools you can use to encourage your players and keep their confidence at a high level.

Positive Charting

Coaches tend to think that they add value only by telling players what they are doing incorrectly and then correcting them. But it is equally important to point out when players are doing things correctly and to reinforce them, so players will continue to do them.

"Positive Charting" is a technique for recording positive efforts and plays made during practices or games. Your positive chart can simply list all of your players with space to note two or three of their specific positive acts.

You can also grade your player's games. For example you can break each play into a grade for effort and assignment. At the end of the game, tally up the score and give them a percentage grade. This is a great way to correct mistakes and praise good performances.

(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

TOOLS FOR POSITIVE COACHING

Winner's Circle

After the game is over, it's tempting for you to comment first. The Winner's Circle has your players talk first.

Depending on how many players you coach, you can all gather in a circle, or, for example, divide into groups of offensive and



defensive players. Once gathered, give each player a chance to comment on something specific that a teammate did well during the game.

As the coach, you go last, and recap the game and the positive performances by individuals and the team. Players grow to look forward to this closing ritual. This can be a great way to keep your players humble and focused after a big win, and to keep their spirits up after a defeat.

(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

COACHING YOUR OWN CHILD

Coaching your own child can offer some of life's greatest moments, though it requires a delicate balance between coaching and parenting. Make it clear to your child when you are in coach "mode." Be sensitive to favoring or penalizing your child.

Serving as both coach and parent gives you even greater than usual influence on your child's emotional tank! Emphasize that you love your child, regardless of on-field performance.



When your child is still young enough, it can be effective to have one piece of clothing that signifies when you're in coaching mode. You can say, "Now I'm putting on my coach hat, where I need to give equal attention to everyone." When coaching your older children, leave your coaching mode at the field, so your children don't feel they are being coached by you 24/7.

(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

**SECTION IV:
WORKING WITH
PARENTS**

WORKING WITH PARENTS

Being able to effectively communicate and work with the parents of your young athletes may be one of the most important parts of coaching in today's society. In the last 15 years we have seen a drastic increase in parental involvement within youth athletics. Parents have become more outspoken and critical of coaching styles, techniques and decision making. However, to instill a true sense of sportsmanship into a player, the parents must be willing to cooperate with you and your coaching staff. The following are a few ways to positively involve and interact with parents.

1. If you are an assistant coach, always speak with your head coach before speaking with a parent. Some head coaches request that all parental concerns are brought to them.
2. 2. Hold a parents only meeting before the season begins. A pre-season parent meeting is a wise investment. People tend to live up to expectations if they know them. A meeting can help mold the behavior of your players' parents.

(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

WORKING WITH PARENTS

Sample Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Your Coaching Philosophy
3. Goals for the Season (present yours and ask for theirs)
4. Season Evaluation Introduction
5. Logistics (practice/games schedules, phone/email lists, etc.)
6. Ask for Parent Volunteers
7. Time for Parent Questions



(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

WORKING WITH PARENTS

Here are a few more discussion ideas and guidelines that could be covered with the parents at the preseason meeting.

- I. Encourage them to have positive dialog with you as a coach before the season gets underway.
- II. Speak with them about the importance of keeping the player's separate from any differences the parents may have with the coach. It puts the coach and his philosophies in a negative light with the player which may lead to stress within the team.
- III. Avoid having the parents "coach" during practice or games. Remind them that you are volunteering your free time and you are the coach. It also confuses the athlete.
- IV. Encourage them to cheer for everyone on the team, not just their own player. Also, encourage parents to show good sportsmanship in the stands for the opposing team. Our players will take notice and follow our example.

(Positive Coaching Alliance, 2011)

WORKING WITH PARENTS

The follow is a pledge created by the Positive Coaching Alliance that can be signed by every parent before the season to hold them accountable to any negative actions.

PCA Parent Pledge

Please read, sign and return to the coach or appropriate official.



1 As a Second-Goal Parent I will let players and coaches take responsibility for the first goal of winning. I will relentlessly focus on the second, more important, goal of using sports to teach life lessons to my child and other youth.

2 I will use positive encouragement to fill the Emotional Tanks of my children, their teammates, and coaches. I understand that people do their best with full E-Tanks.

3 I will reinforce the ELM Tree of Mastery with my child (E for Effort, L for Learning, M for bouncing back from Mistakes). Because I understand a mastery approach will help my child be successful in sports and in life, I will encourage my child to

- put in a high level of effort to get better,
- cultivate a Teachable Spirit to continue to learn and improve,
- use a Mistake Ritual (e.g., “flushing mistakes”) to quickly rebound from mistakes.

4 I will set an example for my child by Honoring the Game and will encourage him/her to remember ROOTS—respect for the Rules, Opponents, Officials, Teammates, and Self. If the official makes a “bad” call against my team, I will Honor the Game and be silent!

5 I will use a self-control routine to avoid losing my composure when things go wrong. I will take a deep breath, turn away from the game to refocus, count backwards from 100 or use self-talk (“I need to be a role model. I can rise above this.”).

6 I will engage in No-Directions Cheering. I will limit my comments during the game to encouraging my child and other players (from both teams).

7 I will get my child to practice and games on time and will be on time picking my child up after games and practices.

8 I will refrain from making negative comments about my child’s coach in my child’s presence.

I understand that this will help to avoid planting negative seeds in my child’s head that can negatively influence my child’s motivation and overall experience.

PRINT ATHLETE’S NAME _____

PARENT’S SIGNATURE _____

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- *Positive Coaching Alliance*
- *Responsible Sports*
- *California Interscholastic Federation*



APPENDIX

Bill Herenda

Executive Director, Sacramento

Positive Coaching Alliance

1314 H Street, Suite 202
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Herenda:

I would greatly appreciate receiving your permission to use, without charge, in a Sportsmanship training manual for youth and high school football coaches, materials found on the Positive Coaching Alliance website, www.positivecoach.org.

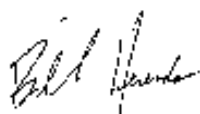
The material used will be from the Double-Goal Coach Workshop as well as Tools for Working with Parents. Photographs and the PCA logo will also be used.

Proper acknowledgement copyright owner and copyright date will be given.

Sincerely,

Robert Case

Permission granted:



Copyright owner or agent

Signature

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