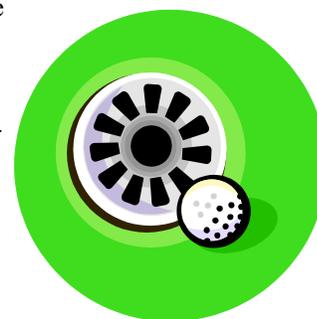




# Coaches Learning about Youth Sports

When starting out as a coach in a Youth First program you must understand that you will be dealing with a lot of different athletes from all different backgrounds and many may be far more skilled than the others. When dealing with young kids especially, some may not have any skill at all. As coaches we must be able to realize the true attributes of an athlete. When this question was asked to many coaches all across the united states by a university psychologist, the dominating trait of a true athlete was whether or not they loved to play the game, whichever game it may be. When dealing with children in the 3rd and 4th grade we must realize that the main reason that they want to play a sport is simply for fun. They aren't thinking about winning championships or going to the state finals, they are in it to have fun and learn to develop skills in a particular sport. This fun will soon develop into a love for the game if they are coached in the right directions. We must not force winning upon children that are just starting off in youth sports. If

we start to stress winning at such a young age the fun will be taken out of the whole experience and we will be left with a very stressed youngster that is so afraid of losing that they will soon disassociate themselves with sports all together due to the bad experiences and the amount of stress that has been placed on them as youngsters. As coaches we must only focus on positive aspects of the game with the kids that are just starting off and develop their skills and help them have as much fun as possible so that they will develop a love for the game that will carry on through their adolescent years.



## Environmental factors effecting athletes

There are many factors that will effect a athlete, especially one that is just getting started in youth sports. Perhaps on of the most influential people in a young persons life is their parents. If the parent of a youngster has a long history of playing a sport such as baseball, they will often be almost forced into playing simply because the parents think their child should

grow up with the same experiences as they did. This may or may not effect the performance of a young athlete. It may cause them to play much harder because they are so determined to seek approval from their parents, or they might play to a lower level than capable because they are being forced to play baseball due to the parents history of success with the sport.

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## - Environmental factors effecting athletes

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In this case the only thing we can do as coaches is try and make their experience a positive one by making it as fun as possible so that the child will like to participate even though they are not playing the sport that they wish to.

Another environmental factor that may have an effect on your athletes are the opportunities that they have had prior to joining your team. Some maybe from very poor neighborhoods where the facilities were very poor or perhaps even non-existent. This makes it hard because these players are al-



**TIME IS NEVER AN OBJECT WHEN COACHING YOUNG ATHLETES**

ready at a disadvantage behind the other players that may be from a different socio-economic background where the facilities and opportunities were far and beyond those other players. In this situation you must handle every player on the team as an equal and do your best to teach all of your players skills so that they can be on the same level. As long as you show positive feedback to all the players whether they be the all stars on the team or the new kids with no experience, your team will have very strong unity and will hopefully play as equals. Make sure to keep every aspect of your coaching positive with young athletes and whether they are from a poor neighborhood or not, they will have fun and will be eager to learn.

## COMMUNICATION IS KEY WHEN COACHING

By far one of the most important characteristics that a coach must have is a strong presence of communication. If a coach cannot communicate with his team, they are not going to know what is expected of them, or what they are doing wrong and right. When dealing with kids in elementary school, they need guidance more than any other groups of kids that you will ever coach. These young athletes just starting off must be able to know what is expected of them as well as what is not. Young athletes also need a lot of extrinsic motivation such as verbal praise. If you cannot communicate with the athletes

and give them positive feedback, they are going to get discouraged because they are never being rewarded. Kids at this age need to be told that they are doing well when they are doing something that is expected of them. A key thing to remember is, the communication must always be positive so it will not discourage our young athletes.

*Young athletes need positive feedback when they are doing something that is asked of them.*

## CREATING A MOTIVATED ATHLETE

When coaching one of the most powerful things that you can do is develop an athlete into one that is motivated. Motivation is one of the most powerful traits that one athlete can have. When an athlete is motivated he/she can possess a drive and love for the game that few other of their teammates will have. When dealing with 3rd and 4th graders the motivation is a little different that the motivation used for teens and adults. Youths depend a lot on extrinsic motivation, meaning they must be given external awards, whether it be praise physically or mentally, or it may be awards or certificates, anyway you look at it youngsters must be told or shown that they are doing a good job so that they will want to achieve a goal or pla-

teau so that they will receive that praise again. External rewards will make a young athlete strive to do a certain task simply to have someone tell them they are doing a good job or to give them some type or reward that says they are doing great. If we start this early, they kids will be motivated and will eventually learn intrinsic motivation which is one of the most powerful tools one can have as an athlete.

