

The game for kids

Coaches and Parents of the NESL,

I would like to give you these excerpts from some articles provided by USYSA. I believe that at times we all need to refocus on why we volunteer as coaches, administrators, and team parents in youth sports. Please take these excerpts to heart.

Susan Wiggs

"What is player development? U S Youth Soccer has coined the phrase, 'The Game for Kids.' The motto of the National Youth License is the 'Game Within the Child.' What does all this mean, and are our actions consistent with these messages?"

"Both of these messages imply that the needs of the child, while playing soccer, should be placed above the needs, convenience, and self-interest of the adults. **True player development focuses on the development of the player, not the development of the team!**"

- Dr. Ronald Quinn, Director of Sports Studies and Head Woman's Soccer Coach at Xavier University.

"The defining achievement of childhood is not a trophy won, a certificate earned or a place secured on a team. It is the successful transition into a confident, happy and high-functioning adolescence. Similarly, the highest achievement of adolescence is the successful transition into young adulthood. the finest reward of coaching children is not a trophy or award, but the child who leaves the last team function sad the season is over and excited about returning the next year."

- Dr. Debbie Wilson, staff sports psychologist at the George Mason University Athletic Department.

"Respect, or the lack of it seems to be a major element in problems in organized sports. While helping players learn about their own talents, the good coach also strives to make them realize that everyone on the team is in the same situation. Ability may differ among people but effort does not, athletes should be striving to do their best, and therefore, they are to be respected. Teammates are encouraged to do their best, and good effort should be applauded."

- Michael Clark, Asst. Professor at the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports at Michigan State University.

" 'A teacher (coach) affects eternity, for he never knows where his influence will end.' Time and again, the lessons you teach – whether or not you intended to teach them – will provide a roadmap for children in your charge to learn from. You are the first teacher of sport to help them with their 'problem solving compass.'"

- David Hillgrove

"Ain't it a shame that all the best referees are on the sidelines of every game?"

"Ain't it a shame to travel anywhere in any state, or any sport, and see leagues argue and bicker amongst themselves, where grown adults use children as pawns to settle some pre-conceived power struggles, where parents forget the main purpose behind their children's participation is one of recreation and enjoyment, and where unity in the name of the game of sport is but an illogical, idealistic notion/fantasy?"

"Ain't it a shame to see parents who enter their children in a sport to learn teamwork and sportsmanship, yet stand on the sidelines during matches and prove that it doesn't exist around us? To add insult to injury, when questioned later as to why they rode the refs so bad, reply: 'They had it coming' or 'They deserved it.'"

"Ain't it a shame to see a league where 400 children wear 400 different uniforms, practice on 38 different teams, with 185 different soccer balls, at five different sites and play 281 different matches on 13 different Saturdays and use 41 different referees AND the same 8 people organize, telephone, administrate, mail, maintain fields, quartermaster the equipment and quietly go home at the end of the season?"

- David Hillgrove

Just some food for thought

Susan