

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH SPORTS AND WHY THEY PLAY

Parental Education Resources for Player Development at South Tangi Youth Soccer Association (STYSA) Soccer Club, Hammond, Louisiana

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THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH SPORTS



Children participate in youth sports for many reasons and motivations change with age



Understanding WHY CHILDREN PARTICIPATE (PLAY) can be helpful for parents in shaping their goals and expectations for them in sports



Just as it is important to understand why children participate, it is also important to understand WHY CHILDREN STOP PARTICIPATING

WHY THEY PLAY

- Children cite “FUN” as the primary reason for participation in organized sports and its absence as the number one reason for youth sports attrition
- They also play because parents want them to play a sport
- Relatives have also played the sport and have some influence



WHY DO CHILDREN CHOOSE SOCCER?

- To have lots of fun
- To make new friends
- To retain current friendships
- To learn a sport
- To get better
- To increase self-esteem
- To wear the uniform kit
- To be part of a team

Notice that “winning” is not one of the reasons

WHY THEY STOP

Research has shown that approximately 70-75% of children will quit playing a sport by the age of 14. Why do they want to stop?

Research says children stop playing sports for a variety of reasons. Six of the seven primary reasons are "ADULT-CONTROLLED" behaviors

Lack of Playing Time

Overemphasis on Winning

Lack of Fun (poor coaching and/or boring training sessions)

Coaching/Adult Behaviors (including criticism, yelling and parental pressure)

Dissatisfaction with Performance (fear of making mistakes)

Lack of Social Support

Other Activities are more interesting (Not adult-controlled)

LACK OF PLAYING TIME

- This is an adult-controlled behavior due to the coaches and parents wanting to "win" the game
- Do players want to win? Absolutely! They all strive to do their very best to win
- Research has also shown that children today would rather play than sit on the bench for a winning team
- Not putting children into a game is like not allowing them to take a test in school
- There is nothing wrong with having some players earn more playing time, but all players should be given a minimum time to play



OVEREMPHASIS ON WINNING

"Winning isn't everything, it is the only thing". That is the famous Vince Lombardi quote which is also misquoted. He actually stated, *"The will to win isn't anything, it is the only thing"*

So many coaches feel as though their whole self-worth is out there on the field, and if they don't win as coaches, then "they" not the children are a failure

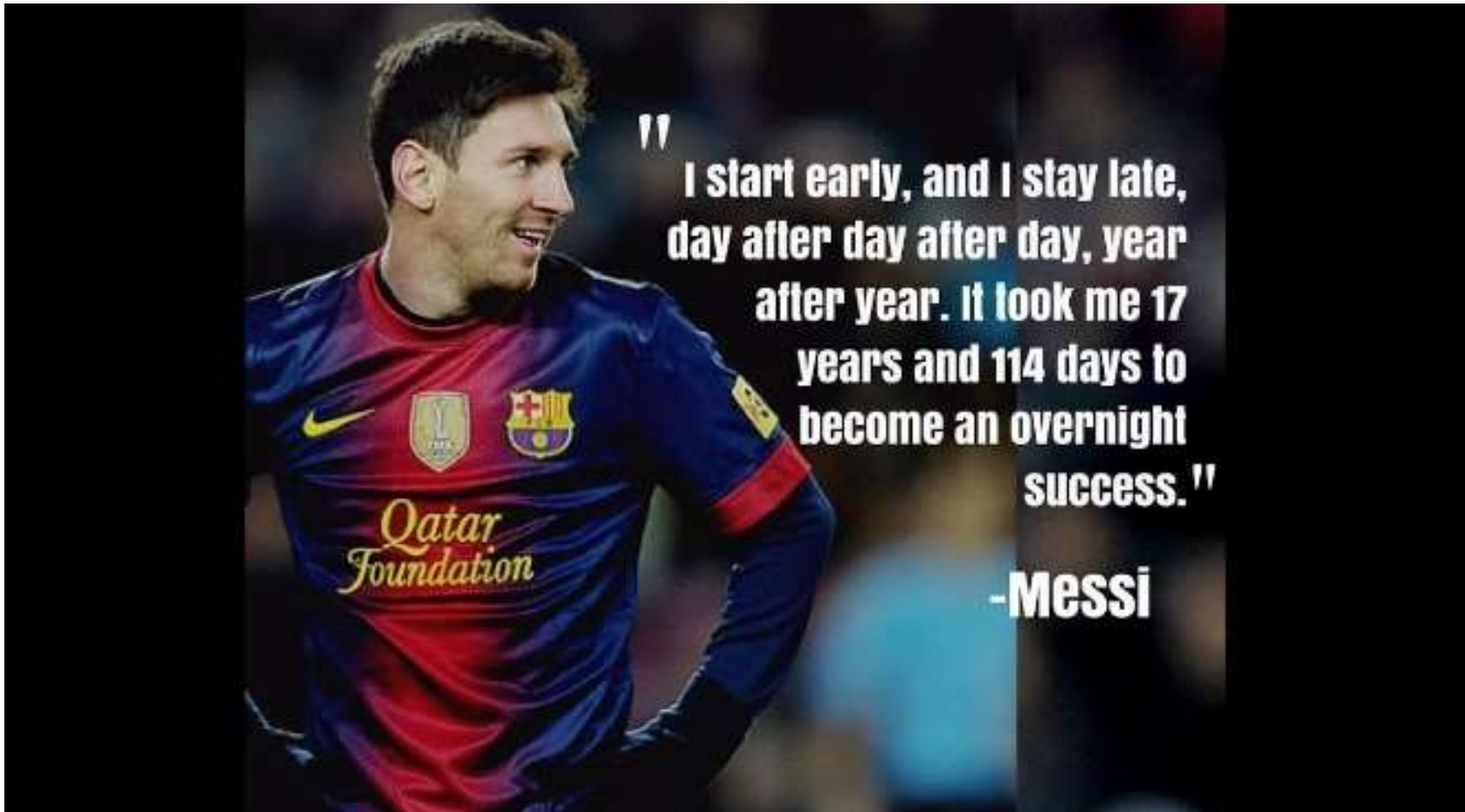
The same goes for adults on the sidelines

The wins will come. Focus on the effort and the player development first

Recent statistics showed that 25% of coaches quit due to adult expectations with regard to outcome

As a coach or parent, you can't control the outcome. If it is the other team's day, it's simply their day!

Soccer is a team sport that is "player" driven - once the ball starts rolling, there is nothing people outside the lines can do



“ I start early, and I stay late,
day after day after day, year
after year. It took me 17
years and 114 days to
become an overnight
success.”

-Messi



LACK OF FUN

Children view sports differently than adults. Most children, if not all, start playing a sport because it looks fun

There is also a saying that "Drills destroy skills." No lines, laps or lectures

Soccer is a free-flowing game where the players make decisions and decide the outcome

Coaches and adults need to know that endurance training is only effective at 12 to 18 months after PHV (Peak Height Velocity), which is about 13 years, 6 months for boys and 11 years, 6 months for girls

For the younger ages (6-10 years of age), they need to work on their fitness (not just endurance) with the ball, rather than running laps

"Teach don't talk." Our children live in a very busy world today. As a result, the ability for them to listen to the coach talk has declined. Teach them in training but make your points short and sweet. Also, include them in the process of learning by asking them questions on the topic you have for that training session.

Finally, let them play!

The game is the best teacher; so as a coach, allow them to play and express themselves and to have FUN!

For some reason, some adults and coaches transform from Winnie the Pooh to Grizzly Bear when a game rolls around. Everything from yelling at officials' bad calls to arguing with parents from the other team is widely seen throughout youth sports.

Remember this - without referees, there is no game!

Put yourself in someone else's shoes. Imagine that your child (who is a new referee) is getting verbally-abused by adults because a hand ball was not called during a U8 match. As a parent, you teach your children to be respectful of their elders and to give their very best effort on the field. Verbal abuse of the officials on the field leads to referee loss. Most of the referees in our area (and in Louisiana) are under the age of 16. We must provide a tolerant, respectful, safe environment for these referees to use as a training ground, and it starts with each and every one of us. It takes a village to raise a child, whether they are players or referees.

COACHING / ADULT BEHAVIORS

COACHING / ADULT BEHAVIORS

- Be a role model for your child. Try to view a game like a "grandparent." Grandparents just want to go to the game and see their grandchild be happy. Let's take a lesson from this. They have been there, done that. Experience is a great teacher.
- Kids can only play freely when we, as adults, allow them to control their own destiny.
- The numbers don't lie, only a small percentage of players will go on to play in college, and even fewer than that will play at the professional level. Refer back to the reason why you enrolled your child in the sport in the first place. For the majority, it was for one of these four reasons – competence, affiliation, fitness or fun. Please remember that your child is not you! Let your kids enjoy the game.

DISSATISFACTION WITH PERFORMANCE

Stay away from "PGA" or Post Game Analysis in the minivan/SUV after the match

Coaches, stay away from the "PGA" closing statements after a tough loss

Children remember this, and feedback isn't always what they want to hear

Children know when they make a mistake in a match. Repeating it again verbally isn't the answer

Try to shift gears and turn a negative into a positive

Let it go, and make sure that they know you still love them no matter how many mistakes they make



LACK OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

- There is "tough" love and there is "TOUGH" love. Most athletes that make it to the next level mention their parents gave them "tough" love but were supportive of them every step of the way
- Be there for your kids through the tough times and the good times
- It is easy to be supportive of them after a victory, a game winning goal or an important save
- Remind your children that tough times don't usually last, but tough people do. When children feel abandoned by their parents/coaches, that is when they often go to something else. Sometimes, that something else isn't a positive activity
- We all can help create a better environment to make sure that children begin playing and keep playing, stay active, keep healthy, and help them to be lifelong participants in athletics

THE FUN INTEGRATION THEORY AND FUN MAPS

- A study was conducted to develop a theoretical framework of fun using a variety of participants: 142 soccer players, 37 coaches and 57 parents
- The results of the study were to identify the things that make playing sports fun for players, sorting of ideas, and rating each idea on its importance, frequency and feasibility
- The results (FUN MAPS) identified 11 fun-dimensions composed of 81 specific fun-determinants that were brainstormed and sorted by players, parents, and coaches



11 FUN- DIMENSIONS (FROM STUDY)

1. Being a Good Sport
2. Trying Hard
3. Positive Coaching
4. Learning and Improving
5. Game Time Support
6. Games
7. Practices
8. Team Friendships
9. Mental Bonuses
10. Team Rituals
11. Swag



PLAY IS THE ANSWER

- Jean Piaget once wrote, *“Play is the answer to the question: how does anything new come about?”*
- When we provide opportunities for – and allow time for – children’s self-initiated play, we are ensuring the full development of their curiosity, their imagination, and their creativity. We are striking the balance between love, work, and play
- Play serves as a training ground for skills, knowledge, and social development
- Play is the beginning of everything ...

BENEFITS OF PLAYING

Sports participation for as little as 2-3 hours per week can result in significant cardiovascular, metabolic, and musculoskeletal adaptations independent of age and gender

Social, emotional and cognitive benefits (making new friends, etc.)

Provides a structure (for development in training and games)

Improves health benefits by addressing the physical inactivity and childhood obesity epidemics by engaging children and adolescents

ACHIEVEMENT IN SPORTS AND LIFE

- Children learn about leadership, communication, accountability, and responsible risk-taking
- Children gain self-esteem, determination, and organizational skills
- Important lessons about achievement, and the meaning of success and failure, can be learned
- Youth sports (when managed properly) can help youngsters to acquire the kind of attitudes, values, and skills that promote achievement and success in all areas of life
- Youth sports (when mismanaged) can create fear of failure, reduce enjoyment, undermine self-worth, and counter values of fair play
- The type of motivational climate that is created by coaches and parents (the adults) is critically important in the outcome (positive or negative), because it communicates different notions about what success is, and what is required to be a “success”
- Adults create the motivational climate by the values they communicate, and by the behaviors they reward or punish



THE PARENT-CREATED SOCCER CLIMATE

Motivation refers to a psychological state or condition that gives rise to, directs, and sustains goal-directed activity

“Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to do the best of which you are capable.”

John Wooten, Basketball Hall of Fame player and coach

TYPES OF PARENT-CREATED CLIMATES:

- Nurturing Climate (Mastery Climate)
- Negative Climate (Ego-based)

PARENT- CREATED NURTURING SOCCER CLIMATE



The focus is on :



1. developing skills



2. fun and enjoyment



3. learning from mistakes



4. trying hard and giving full effort



5. challenging oneself



6. caring communication



7. playing fairly and as a good sport



PARENT- CREATED NEGATIVE SOCCER CLIMATE

In this climate, athletes:

1. believe that success is obtained without effort
2. expect to be punished for mistakes
3. worry about outperforming others or not being outperformed
4. worry about failing
5. focus only on winning

COACH-CREATED NURTURING SOCCER CLIMATE


In this climate:

- athletes strive to exceed their own previous best
- coaches encourage mastery of skills
- coaches reward and value effort, regardless of outcome
- coaches teach that mistakes and setbacks are part of learning
- coaches encourage cooperation among team members
- athletes have a unique and important role on the team
- athletes have fun and enjoy soccer
- everyone values fairness and respect



COACH-CREATED NEGATIVE SOCCER CLIMATE

In this climate, coaches:

- encourage athletes to outperform and display ability of higher quality than others
 - encourage interpersonal rivalries among teammates
 - give unequal attention to athletes (e.g., more attention to the “stars”)
 - sacrifice athlete skill development for the sake of winning
 - yell at and punish athletes for mistakes
- 



WHAT CAN PARENTS DO

- Emphasize fun, participation, and skill improvement rather than winning and losing
- Emphasize striving to improve skills rather than comparing oneself to others
- Help children to understand that despite the importance of sport to them, it is only one area of their lives
- Communicate love and acceptance to your child whether he/she is a star on team or benchwarmer (this creates a basis for positive self-esteem development for the child regardless of the child's eventual achievements in sports)
- Provide approval and recognition to the developing athlete (approval and recognition provide powerful motivation for athletes at all levels)
- Provide positive encouragement (this will increase a greater sense of enjoyment, competence, and motivation in their child)

A FINAL OBSERVATION

“As parents, I believe that whenever possible we should do our best to give our kids what they need and some of the things they want as well. One thing that all kids want, and we are capable of giving them, is a pleasurable sports experience. Better yet, this is the most likely path to high performance for it develops athletes who control their destiny, fall in love with their sport, and as a result willingly put in the time, effort, and commitment needed to perform at their highest possible level.”

John O’Sullivan

Please watch this video (very inspiring) and enjoy ...

TED – Changing the Game in Youth Sports – John O’Sullivan (2014)

<https://youtu.be/VXw0XGOVQvw>

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