



Positive Approach is Best

Despite the unfortunate stories we see and hear in the media, it is still our belief that the majority of coaches, parents, administrators, and referees involved in youth sports today are good people who want what's best for the kids. Having said that, issues do surface among the above-mentioned people, emotions escalate, and in some cases things get out of control.

When things go awry on the field or court, we naturally tend to react strongly to the immediate situation instead of keeping it in perspective. But when overreaction occurs, it can short-circuit rational thought and quickly break down communications, making matters even worse.

So should we fail to stick up for our child out of fear of making a scene? Certainly not! But if we ask the same child how he or she would like us to handle the situation, they would prefer we resolve the issue using a positive approach instead of letting the increased blood pressure lead to a brawl in the parking lot where we could ultimately end up in jail. Here are some thoughts for taking the high ground that anyone involved in youth sports should consider.

The first step in resolving a concern should be to speak with (not yell at) the person you perceive did something that was inappropriate or unfair. Persistence in pursuing an issue is okay, but respect is a key ingredient if we expect a productive outcome. If this attempt fails to resolve the issue, we can move on to the next step.

Most sports leagues are independent organizations. Consequently they establish their own conflict resolution policies and procedures. Typically, each organization has a commissioner and a board of directors that has ultimate responsibility for handling any problems or disputes. In fairness to the commissioner, we recommend you give him or her an opportunity to resolve your concerns.

Once alerted to a situation, the commissioner normally starts by hearing all sides of the story. Everyone involved has a right to provide input. After gathering the necessary information, the commissioner normally briefs the board of directors prior to rendering a final decision. If someone finds the commissioner's decision unacceptable, they may appeal the case to the board of directors.

The Fumble

I went over left tackle, hands on the ball,
 The next thing I knew it was in a free fall.
 The ball had come loose as I was hit from behind,
 It was a mistake, but from the back, I am blind.
 The other team recovered at the final horn,
 I tried to keep my head up but was definitely forlorn.
 I knew the coach was angry when I came to the side,
 He screamed, and cursed and batted my pride.
 I explained to the coach, the defense made a great play,
 He didn't want to hear it, I had ruined his day.
 As I stood on the sidelines, my head hung with shame,
 The coach said because of me, we had lost the game.
 How can that be, it was only one play,
 I had never fumbled on any other day.
 But the coach seemed intent on laying the blame,
 On me who lost the ball and evidently the game.
 I let my team down, the coach continually said,
 More than a game was lost, it messed with my head.
 I no longer play football, it's lost all its thrill,
 I'm a ten year old kid who is over the hill!

Randy Henline



Boys and Girls Clubs, Parks and Recreation Departments, YMCA's, etc. have staff members and a chain of command that you can talk with about your concerns.

It's usually good practice to address concerns in writing and ask that the commissioner and/or board of directors to respond accordingly. We encourage you to communicate verbally as well.

Bottom line: if an issue needs to be resolved, pursue it with a positive approach. Your desired outcome is more likely to occur and your child will be better off for it.

For a great article on how to become an effective critic check out <http://www.charactercounts.org/knxwk350.htm>.

Handling Difficult Situations

We are often asked some tough questions by youth administrators, coaches and parents. Recently, we were asked for advice on several situations. The situations all dealt with what a coach or youth administrator could or should do to remove a kid who has been asked to leave the playing area, e.g. ejected from the game or who is causing a disruptive situation but still refusing to leave the area.

We discussed the issue with the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services in Austin, a Professional Counselor and Family Therapist and an attorney. Here's the consensus of our research.

Even when there is a definite need to remove a kid from the field or playing area, the coach, commissioner, umpire or whoever SHOULD NOT attempt to physically remove the child. If the parents are in the area, they should be asked to escort their child off. If that proves to be unsuccessful, the umpire, coach, team captain (a peer of the kid), etc. should ask the kid to leave. If he still refuses, then it seems appropriate to warn the kid (and parents if available) that police will be dispatched if necessary to have him removed. If the parents aren't on hand, the coach should refer to his/her emergency phone numbers and try to contact the parents and advise them of the situation. Perhaps the parents can talk with the child on the coach's cell phone and convince him to leave the field or area. If that approach doesn't work, the coach should then advise the parents and child that the police will be called.

While calling the police on a young child may be perceived as overreaction to some, we believe this is the best approach. It's possible in these frustrating situations for a coach or any person to be upset enough and without knowing, unintentionally cause discomfort or injury by grabbing a child.

Can a coach, commissioner, etc. be charged with assault for physically escorting a kid off the field? According to our attorney, the coach wouldn't get charged for escorting the kid off the field, but he could be charged with injury to a child, which is a felony under the penal code. Even if no proof of injury is present, being charged with assault can be a long and drawn out process which forces the coach to defend his/her position. While it's likely the coach would be found innocent, who would want to be dragged through the courts and have his/her reputation and credibility tested in that fashion?

A school teacher advised us that teachers are not authorized to forcibly remove a kid from the classroom. In the event a kid refuses to leave, teachers are instructed to call the front office. Subsequently, campus security or local law enforcement officials would be dispatched.

Despite the frustration many would encounter in these situations, it's extremely important to remain calm and take the high ground. What matters most is the well-being of the young athletes - ALWAYS!

Basketball Drill - 5 Ball

Here is a great drill to start a practice after the players have stretched and warmed-up. It can be used as a conditioning drill and a shooting drill. This is a timed drill to see how many points the team can score in 5 minutes. Coaches can modify this drill to 3 minutes depending on the conditioning of their players. Each basket counts as one point. The drill can be modified throughout the season by increasing the expected number of completed baskets every practice. For example, if the team made 30 baskets the first time they did the drill, the next time the coach can tell the team to try for 35, and so on throughout the season.

Equipment:

5 Basketballs
Two Baskets (Full Court)
Stopwatch
Scorekeeper

Procedure:

Form 3 lines on the baseline. (One line for each lane of the court) The first player in the middle line should have a ball.

The second player in each outside line should have a ball. Assign two players with balls on the opposite baseline. The first group of three will pass middle-side-middle down the court.

The middle player will perform a right-handed lay-up once he/she reaches the free-throw line. He/she will get his/her own rebound and get set to go back the other way.

Meanwhile, the two side players will get set to shoot and the two players who were assigned to the opposite end of the court will pass them the ball. (Make sure these players get set in their shooting range). The two players that shot will get their own rebound and wait to pass the balls to the next group.

Once the two players who passed to the shooters have passed the ball, they will pass middle-side-middle down the court with the player who performed the lay-up.

Once he/she reaches the free-throw line, the middle player will perform a left-handed lay-up. He/she will get his/her own rebound and pass to the next middle player in line.

The two side players will get set to shoot and the two players with balls will pass them the balls, then proceed down the court with the middle player passing middle-side middle.

While the players are performing this drill, the scorekeeper should be counting every made basket. The coach should be keeping an eye on the stopwatch and the drill. After the time has expired, it is a good idea to put the players on the free throw line and have them shoot free throws while they are tired. This is a good way to transition to your next drill as well.

