

## Our Sport Consultants Can...

Teach athletes psychological skills and mental toughness to achieve performance excellence.

Provide counseling to help athletes, coaches and parents achieve optimal mental health, enjoyment in sport and better performances.

Work with teams to develop leadership, communication and cohesion.

Consult with coaches/leaders to help them build championship teams and be the best leader possible.

Work with parents to help them provide the best support possible for their children as they pursue sport and competition.

Help individuals become more involved in sport, exercise, and physical activity to develop their physical health and psychological well-being.

Make presentations to teams, coaches, sport organizations on psychological skills, such as imagery, confidence, emotional control, attentional focus, goal setting, and pre-performance routines.



# A Coaches Guide to Developing a Positive Youth Sport Team



CENTER FOR SPORT PSYCHOLOGY  
AND PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE

at the University of North Texas

**I N P A R T N E R S H I P  
W I T H**



## Our Qualifications

Members of the 2004-2008 United States Olympic Committee Sport Psychology Registry

Certified Sport Psychologist Consultants and Fellows, Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP)

Licensed Psychologists

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## KIDS & COACHING

*To create a positive environment for the kids who play for you, one of the best things you can do is develop supportive relationships with your athletes' parents. The foundation of these relationships is good communication, and a preseason meeting is a great place to start. At this meeting, focus on the following:*

1. *Parents' behaviors influence their children's sport experiences* – make sure everyone is committed to helping the kids have FUN, and give parents ideas on how they can be positive and supportive.
2. *Share expectations and guidelines about the team*— be clear about what you expect from the athletes (e.g., attend at least one practice a week), and parents (e.g., be encouraging and positive).
3. *Explain rules of the game*— understanding the rules of a game will make it more enjoyable to watch.
4. *Explain your coaching philosophy*— what are your values about sport, kids, practices, competition and making sports FUN.
5. *Communicate team goals for season*— make sure everyone knows what you want to accomplish...having fun, teaching new skills, and learning to play together.
6. *Explain procedures for talking with you*— make sure parents and athletes understand when and where its appropriate to talk to you.
7. *Let parents know how they can be involved*— give them tasks to do throughout the season to help them be involved with their kids.
8. *Answer parents' questions*— give parents the chance to talk with you about their thoughts, goals, ideas for the season.

**When you're coaching kids, it's vital to teach them that football is a game that you should have fun playing.**

**-Joe Theismann**

*There also are things that you can do once the season has started to continue to create a positive environment for your athletes:*

1. *Be consistent*—kids notice when you are not, and that will affect their motivation and desire to play
2. *Be in control emotionally*— be a positive role model for the kids when at practices and competitions.
3. *Be clear and positive in your communications*—be encouraging, positive and direct when talking athletes and parents.
4. *Positively reinforce behaviors*— the kids will make mistakes, and when they do, be encouraging. Help them learn what they did wrong and how they can do the skill better the next time. Never yell at a player for a mistake.
5. *Ask for feedback from parents*— how are you doing? How are the kids enjoying practices and games? Parents can be a great source of information.
6. *Do something FUN at each game*— after game snacks or going somewhere for a treat are great ideas.
7. *Have an end of the season party*—parties are fun and a great way to recognize all that has been learned and done during the season.

## KIDS & COMPETITION

Kids do love to compete (and win!), but winning is not the most important thing for younger athletes.

To develop and set the stage for being a successful athlete, kids need to first learn the FUNDamentals of the sport. In youth sport, the focus should be on learning new skills, being physically active, and spending time with friends.

As kids get older and have played for several years, the focus can shift to learning how to compete (not necessarily win), how to work better as a team, and how to implement some basic strategies/plays. Pushing winning or competing on children when they aren't ready can contribute to their dropping out of sport.

## KIDS & CHARACTER

**Sport has the POTENTIAL to help kids develop in the following ways:**

*Socially-* learn to communicate, resolve conflicts  
*Ethically-* learn about fair play, being a good sport  
*Emotionally-* manage emotions, develop empathy  
*Psychologically-* develop self-confidence, optimism

The end result depends on the environment that is created by coaches and parents. For young athletes (particularly ages 5-10) having FUN is the number one priority, and a sure way to help them develop. Here are some ways you can create a fun environment:

1. *Focus on learning new skills and improving existing ones* – kids want to learn new things. Keep instructions short and simple, and provide lots of encouragement and time for practice.
2. *Plan times for socializing* – much of the joy of sports comes from spending time friends. Give the kids time at the beginning and end of practice to enjoy each other.
3. *Set and work toward realistic goals* – set goals that are based on improving performances, learning new skills, and working together as a team, not just on winning. Try to set goals that are appropriate for the age and experiences of the kids you are coaching.
4. *Share decision-making* – kids love to make decisions and should be given opportunities to do so in sport. For example, you could have a weekly “team leader” who gets to choose a drill in practice or lead warm-ups.
5. *Be supportive and enthusiastic* – catch them doing things right! If they make a mistake, let them know that it is OK and then offer some guidance on how they improve their performance next time.
6. *Foster a love of physical activity* – plan practices so the kids are playing games and are actively involved. This can be a good chance for them to practice new skills.

**Be more concerned with your character than your reputation because your character is what you really are.**

**- John Wooden**