

5 WAYS TO BUILD SPORTSMANSHIP IN YOUNG ATHLETES

By Michael Clarke | Active.com

Sportsmanship isn't just about shaking hands after the game. It's about helping young athletes enjoy the spirit of competition, deal with adversity, and handle authority figures properly.

Here are five tips to boost sportsmanship in young players-and help them prepare for life in the process.

1. Sportsmanship Tip No.1: Find a Role Model

Character is a word that gets used often, but its true meaning may be hard to explain to a young mind. It's ultimately a choice to hold oneself to a higher standard. By raising standards early, an athlete can both give and expect mutual respect during their course of competition.

2. Sportsmanship Tip No.2: Give 110 Percent

One way to instill the idea of sportsmanship is to let the athlete know that they should do their personal best and to treat teammates and opponents in the same fashion they wish to be treated. This age-old idea will help them become an admirable and respected competitor, and help them off the field as well.

3. Sportsmanship Tip No.3: Forget the Numbers

It's important to the young athlete to understand that for as many victories as they hope to have, they must face losing if they're going to play their sport. An effective method is to have a young athlete pick out well-known popular athletes, particularly in their sport or sports of interest, and look up their statistics. Knowing that professional athletes have faced defeat can teach the young competitor to deal with loss rationally and graciously.

4. Sportsmanship Tip No.4: What (Not) to Do

Dealing with adversity and authority figures in sports is another challenge that young athletes must face. This is another instance where the proper explanation of how situations should and should not be dealt with, as well as examples from professional sports, should be used. One can easily find examples of the proper and improper handling of referees, umpires and judges to provide visual examples to back up instruction.

5. Sportsmanship Tip No.5: Have Fun

Sometimes young athletes need to be constantly reminded that sports are designed to be fun. Practice and skill building should be offset by times of goofing off not critiquing or coaching in the traditional sense. This one little thing can do wonders in reminding the athlete not to take anything too serious and to have fun doing what they have chosen to participate in.

"I would advise all youths aspiring to athletic fame or a professional career to practice clean living, fair play and good sportsmanship."

- Major Taylor

"I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

- Michael Jordan

