

**YMCA of GREATER DAYTON**

**PARENT  
HANDBOOK  
PREBLE COUNTY YMCA**



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

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### Dear Parents,

The YMCA knows how important parents are. This booklet is offered by the YMCA Youth Sports parents with our respect. It was written because Y leadership is trying to do more than produce professional players. The Y is in the people business, helping kids and families deal with their values. By doing so, the Y believes these people will make better decisions and create a better world. We know that values education is a primary job of the family, and we want to help families—not replace them.

This booklet raises questions about values. That is the most important thing Y leadership can do—raise questions in a supportive environment. A YMCA Youth Sports parent might read this booklet and get some ideas, or simply become more aware of his or her own feelings, by thinking about the questions. Or a group of YMCA Youth Sports parents might get together and discuss some of these trigger stories or parenting situation in an effort to learn from each other.

No matter how you use this booklet, we hope you, as parents, will convey to your children the idea that “win or lose, we love you.” We also hope you'll continue to support YMCA Youth Sports Programs throughout the year. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome. See you at the games!

**--YMCA Staff**

“Parents should not stress winning; they should stress giving 100% and trying your hardest.”



**To:** Parents of YMCA Youth Sports Players  
**From:** YMCA Staff

Welcome to a group of parents who can help make our YMCA Youth Sports Programs a special and successful experience for all our youngsters.

Fundamental to the YMCA is an effort to provide programs for personal growth, development, and fun for youth through a small group environment and committed adult leadership. YMCA Youth Sports is one way to do this.

As a YMCA, we would like to share with parents the rewarding responsibility of helping youth grow. We are committed to creating an environment where kids can grow, develop, mature, and have fun. As parents, you play an important part in that environment by reinforcing the program, especially between practices and games. Kids want to feel good about themselves. They also want their parents to feel good about them. Effective involvement of parents meets both objectives.

Specifically, you participate when you

1. Support your child's participation by praising improvements and what is done well;
2. Attend meets, practices, and special events when possible;
3. Are aware of the youth sports philosophy and goals and abide by them (especially be aware of showing respect for officials, coaches, opposing teams, and fellow team members);
4. Spend time with your child working on skills and attitudes developed during practice and games;
5. Spend time with your child listening as he or she talks about accomplishments and feelings; and
6. Volunteer in a way that will help the program.

Our program emphasis is on having fun and learning to enjoy the sport. It is also on learning sport skills as well as on life-long values of sportsmanship, self-respect, respect for others, and sound attitudes about winning and losing.

We hope this booklet will provide you with some insight on what we are attempting to do. If you have questions regarding this program, call the YMCA.

## YMCA Competitive Sports Philosophy

“The important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part. The important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle; the essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well. To spread these precepts is to build up a more scrupulous and more generous humanity.”

--Baron Pierre du Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic Games

The value of youth participating in athletic events is one of the underlying principles of the YMCA. We spend much time, money, and effort in our youth sports programs, where young men and women can learn in a healthy, competitive way that sports are not just for the physically gifted and talented. There are thousands of young people in our community who will not compete in the serious world of high school or college athletics, but who can learn from an early age to appreciate the joy of movement, the skills necessary for daily activities and sports participation, and the development of their overall strength and fitness.

The youth programs at the YMCA are also geared to help young people develop social skills for group and team interaction. The activities help them to develop basic knowledge to live healthy lives and to practice good living habits. Yet most importantly, it is our hope that youth sports programs at the YMCA will be an opportunity for young people to understand, practice, and even develop their own values, morals, and spiritual beliefs in interaction with other young people under the guidance of understanding and helpful adult coaches, teachers, group leaders, and parents.

At the YMCA we practice a holistic approach to sports, with emphasis on positive physical, mental, and spiritual development. We believe that in our society today there is too much emphasis on winning at all costs and on special recognition for sporting ability. Our program holds other values that are important:

1. Developing self-confidence, self-respect, and an appreciation of your own worth as an individual
2. Developing a faith for daily living based on the teaching of Jesus so that you may achieve your highest potential as a child of God
3. Growing as a responsible member of your family and as a citizen of your community
4. Appreciating that health of mind and body is a sacred gift and that physical fitness and mental well-being are conditions to be achieved and maintained
5. Recognizing the worth of all people and working for interracial and intergroup understanding
6. Developing your capacity for leadership and using it responsibly in your own groups and community life
7. Developing a sense of world-mindedness and working for worldwide understanding

These seven objectives have been adopted by the National YMCA. We hope that through our programs each young person will gain a greater measure of life skills and a better sense of who he or she is. When this happens, the investment of time, talent, and funds has been worthwhile, making the program a valuable part of our community.

**Cheating gains  
a shallow victory**

## **You Can Make It a Family Program**

Many YMCA Youth Sports families have a weekly family discussion. The parents take the initiative to add a family dimension to the YMCA Youth Sports season. With all the time pressure created by practices, meal changes, and traveling, family communication can suffer. People are tired and can get short with each other.

So families are wise to set aside, and really protect, a set time during the week for an old-fashioned family meeting. The following are ideas for family discussion topics.

### **Chores**

With the family routine messed up, some things don't get done. Maybe this is a good time to rethink the household chores. Make a game of it. Together, list the essential chores and draw straws to see who gets first choice. Keep the chore assignments for a week and then rotate the order of choice. You might also want to talk about what chores are important to whom and why.

### **Goals**

At the beginning of the YMCA Youth Sports season many kids set a personal goal to accomplish certain skills during the season. As a family, each person could talk about what he or she would like to do in a different sport this season. Each member could set his/her own goal, write it down, and post it on the family bulletin board to talk about at different points during the season.. Mom and Dad too, should participate by setting a goal in a sport they like to play.

### **Health**

In competitive sports kids learn a lot about diet and exercise. They gain experiences in how their bodies react to good training or to mistakes or slips. The family could talk about nutrition and exercise and how better habits could affect each person in the family.

### **Learning**

The family discussion could involve learning together about sports played at the YMCA. The family could watch sports events on television together, or individual family members could research a sport in the library and share new learning with the others.

### **Space**

Togetherness is important, but so is space to be yourself. A significant family discussion could be centered around what each family member likes in the way of privacy and time alone. If all family members can express this preference, then the others can give them their space.

### **Involvement**

There are many kinds of parents involved in youth sports programs. The YMCA appreciates the parents who are interested but not pushy . . .who are supportive but not prying . . . who back their kids but give them room to be themselves. The following are suggestions for those parents in our youth sports program who want to be involved but who don't want to focus that involvement on winning alone.

1. Take an hour each week to play with your child. All sports can be played in some way at home or in the neighborhood. This can be fun and you can demonstrate your interest by participating in the sport. Don't bother keeping score. Just enjoy the activity.

2. Make up a new game. Have fun developing a crazy new game together, maybe with a really different twist on the objective. Include the basic skills of a specific sport but make the rules and objectives completely different.
3. Watch a game together on TV. Your child will learn values from the way you react to the game. Try to share some of your feelings about good performances and about the ways the athletes relate to each other. Talk about the roles of the officials, the coaches, and the spectators.
4. Do research together on a sport. Dig into old book to find out when and why it was invented and how it has changed over the years. Discuss those changes and the reason for them. This will help you develop an appreciation for the game itself, rather than just for how the pros play it.
5. Take a specific short block of time after each game to debrief. Set up a format for this that doesn't put you in an authority role and doesn't end in hard judgments. Instead, focus on skills and feeling and end by considering what was learned from this game that could be used in the next one.
6. Put up a bulletin board in you home dedicated to the sport. During the season, have everyone in the family clip newspaper reports on the sport and pin up pictures and articles that have meaning for them. Once a week, look at the bulletin board together and discuss anything on it that seems important.
7. Parents—do a lot of listening. Elicit feeling from your children with good, open questions that stimulate their thinking. Then listen and accept. Don't try to make them give your answer. Just accept them as they say what they want to say. Then nudge them with another question and again accept the answer. Trust your kids to think about the questions and the few comments you make. They are learning from you all the time. It doesn't take a big lecture—the little comments you make add up to much more than any lecture. Tune into your kids and you may be amazed and pleased with the maturity your children gain.

How do you as a parent reward your child and other children in the program for things they do well? You can offer smiles when you greet each other and words and phrases of encouragement during the games. You can offer yells of excitement and high fives when something goes right. You can offer a handshake or a pat that says we both tried, or you can offer an arm around the shoulder and the close silence that communicates “I know how you feel and I believe in you enough to know there will be another day.” Celebration of closeness between parent and child need to take place every day. Don't save them for a later date.

We at the YMCA are glad you're the type of parent who cares—not the type who never says anything or never goes to a game. We're also glad you're not the type who is super pushy, who asks about every detail, who yells at the coaches, players, and referees at most of the games, and who insists his child must win at all costs.

We have published this book to help you understand your role in the YMCA Youth Sports Program. Both you and your child will benefit by understanding its contents.

Good luck. I hope this will be a good season for the entire YMCA family.

## **YMCA Youth Sports . . . Every Kid a Winner**

Over the years the YMCA, locally and nationally, has observed an ever-increasing trend toward more organized and more competitive sports for kids. At the same time, kids are burning out on sports by the time they reach high school. Neither the less proficient nor the very proficient are enjoying sports for their own sake. Kids are being rated good or bad athletes early in their careers, creating problems of confidence and inhibiting future development. Everyone is aware of the poor models set by some parents and coaches.

YMCA Youth Sports are different. The emphasis is on having fun and learning to enjoy the sport. We also emphasize learning skills of the sport, as well as lifelong values of sportsmanship, self-respect, respect for others, and sound attitudes about winning or losing.

Competition is an important part of the program, but it is kept in its proper perspective. How you win and how you feel about yourself are more important.

The YMCA Youth Sports program is successful because it uses good people and includes parents. Here are two facts about the program you as a parent should be aware of and should tell your child:

1. Each child will play half of every game.
2. No league standings are kept—all players receive participation awards at the end of the season.

We hope we've provide you with some insight on what we are attempting to do. If you have questions regarding this program, call the YMCA.

YMCA Youth Sports allow every kid to be a winner.

### **House Rules**

1. Speak for yourself . . . not for anyone else.
2. Listen to others . . . then they will listen to you.
3. Avoid put-downs . . . who needs them?
4. Show mutual respect . . . every person is important.
5. Take charge of yourself . . . you are responsible for you.

### **Add you own family rules:**

- 6.
- 7.

One key to family communication is the environment in which the family lives—the “feeling” or sense family members get about themselves and other in the family. A positive environment is built on house rules that all members of the family agree on. The list of rules on this page may give your family some ideas. Talk about them and then make a poster of your own family house rules.

**“Win or Lose . . .  
. . . We Love You”**

## **Fair Play Concepts**

Playing sports can be an exciting and enjoyable struggle, both with yourself and others. But the feelings of being excited and having fun are closely tied to your attitudes—what you think and feel about the game, the other team, and yourself. Top athletes have a set of attitudes that we call “fair play.” But what exactly is fair play? Here are some of the key points:

### **Respect for the Other Team**

You need the other team. Without the other team you can't play. So you need to show respect for the other players by treating them as needed partners, not as enemies. When you play against a good, strong team that you respect, you usually play a better game.

### **Respect for Yourself**

We know that how people look at things, influences what they do. So, if you think of yourself as a good player, as an important part of the team, you are more likely to play like one—to set goals for yourself, practice on your own, and perform well in games. Fair play means that you believe in yourself and see yourself as important in some things, if not in everything.

### **Cooperation With Officials**

The rules of the game help you play the game better. Fair play means that you go along with the rules and cooperate with the referees, who are there for one main purpose—to make sure the game is played better. If you are really honest with yourself and with the referees, you'll usually get more out of the game.

### **Getting Involved**

A good player wants to get into the game but also wants other to play. Fair play means you defend the right to play both for yourself and for others.

### **Building the Team**

To be a good team member, you need to get to know all of your teammates and the coach and to let them get to know you. We are all different in ability and in skills. Fair play is listening to each other, learning from each other, sharing ideas and feelings, and helping each other increase strengths and reach goals.

### **Sticking Up For What You Believe**

If you believe in fair play and stick up for it, you will be respected over the long haul. It means taking a stand in favor of the things above. It means letting others know that you value your teammates, the other team, yourself, and the rules of the game. We all like to win—but not at the cost of giving up what we believe in.

## Parent/Child Discussions and Feelings

**Consider where you are on each of these lines.  
Decide where there is room for you to improve.  
Discuss with your child what your feelings are.**

### **Encourage**

### **Push**

How can I encourage my child without pushing her too much? I know the coach and the other kids are pushing her. There is a lot of pressure in youth sports. But I don't want to seem disinterested. I want to say "do your best" yet not have her feel forced. It's got to be fun, too.

### **Listen**

### **Be listened to**

I have to discipline myself to listen to my child. He is growing and changing, and if I don't listen to him I'll miss a lot of his development. I'll be operating on some outdated assumptions. Yet I want to be listened to. My child is still my child! I want to set limits and directions—I want to be heard.

### **YMCA Sports are important**

### **YMCA Sports aren't everything**

I think it is really neat that my child likes YMCA Sports. There are so many less desirable things she could have drifted into. I'm proud of the way she has taken an interest in and works at her skills. Yet I want her to keep it in perspective. School is important. A job is important. There are other sports, hobbies, and activities I'd like to see her take an interest in, too.

### **Coach**

### **Parent**

It is really difficult not to try to be both parent and coach. I think I know my child so well, and I'm threatened a bit by how important the coach is to him. Things, I've said for years he's finally doing now because the coach says them. It's a real dilemma.

Why don't you talk things over with other YMCA Youth Sports parents? You might find new ideas on how other have dealt with these and similar tensions. Instead of talking about YMCA Sports next time you get together, try talking about parenting.

### Four Important Questions for a YMCA Youth Sports Parent

1. What has your example been for your child in these areas:
  - Self-discipline and hard work?
  - Being a good winner and a good loser?
  - Supporting the whole team?
  - Learning from mistakes?
  - Setting a goal and reaching it?
2. Does our child know your feelings about cheating?
3. When did you last sit and really listen to your child?
4. How does your child know you support him in his YMCA Sports efforts?

## Being a YMCA Youth Sports Parent Isn't Easy

Parenting is a tough job. And when a member of the family decides to join YMCA Youth Sports, it gets even tougher.

You've done a lot already to bring up your child. You've created the environment in which your child has grown. You've shared your values with your child by the structure you've given him/her life and by the model you've been for him/her. You've exposed him/her to the world as she knows it.

Since your child joined YMCA Youth Sports, you've gotten involved in a whole new set of things. You've had to adjust the family routine. A lot of your time has gone into transporting your child to practice at inconvenient times and to Saturday games. You've sacrificed some of your own interest, and others in your family have had to adjust. And it hasn't been free, either.

But you've gotten some returns, too. There is the pride you feel as your son or daughter plays. There is some kind of expression of thanks your child has "said" to you. You've met other parents and gained some new friends. Possibly you've learned something new about the YMCA Youth Sports programs.

### Important Don't for Parents

1. Don't put yourself in your son's or daughter's place out there. Your child on the floor is not you. If he makes a mistake, it's his mistake. If he makes a basket, it's his basket. Glory or grief, it's his game.
2. Don't talk about the "big game" all day. Chances are the "big game" isn't as important to your child as it is to you. Your child will probably keep the game in proper perspective if only you would.
3. Don't criticize your child or other children on your child's team or other teams.
4. Don't yell instructions to your child. That's the coach's job. Besides, your child will be able to hear your voice over the crowd, which will make him/her more nervous. Shout only general encouragement.
5. Don't start analyzing your child's performance right after the game. All your child wants is peace, quiet, and something to eat.
6. Never criticize the coach, even if it's apparent he doesn't understand the game. Before you complain, decide whether you're ready to give up your valuable free time to step into that coach's shoes. If not, don't complain.
7. Don't abuse the referees. They are **not** being paid and "baiting" the referee doesn't promote the respect for authority demanded from your child at home and at school.
8. Don't decide your child has a future with a professional team, but don't write him off, either. Kids mature athletically at different paces.
9. Don't forget to praise your child for simply performing. Don't over praise or dwell on a mistake with scorn or anger. After all, these are children.
10. Don't forget to praise all the players after the game, especially if they lost.
11. And please, don't take sports so seriously. Even the "big game" isn't the answer to world hunger or even getting along with each other. Let it just be fun!

## Guidelines for Supportive Parents

Few youth programs are successful without the support of parents. Below are a few guidelines for concerned parents as they strive to support their young athletes without being pushy.

- 1. Supportive parents focus on mastering sport skill and strategies rather than on competitive ranking.** Sport mastery focuses on performance that can be controlled by the athlete, whereas competitive ranking focuses primarily on winning and losing, an outcome frequently outside the athlete's control. An overemphasis on competitive rank and an under emphasis on sport mastery are primary causes of the dramatic dropout rates from competitive sports by 12 to 18-year-olds.
- 2. Supportive parents decrease the pressure to win.** Supportive parents realize that sport creates its own pressure to succeed. Additional pressure from the parent is likely to be counterproductive, particularly in the long run. Supportive parents avoid making the outcome of a game bigger than life. As a game or a competition becomes blown out of proportion, a youngster's self-esteem can become tied to winning or losing. A child should not feel less valuable or less loved when a match is lost.
- 3. Supportive parents believe that sport's primary value is the opportunity for self-development.** The probability of achieving lasting fame and glory via sport is low. Many outstanding athletes never achieve professional status, but their sport experiences have allowed them to develop life-long values and self-respect.
- 4. Supportive parents understand the risks.** Competition places athlete—even a child athlete—on center stage. Any time anyone attempts to succeed publicly, he/she risks failing in front of others. In the long run, competing is a willingness to chance failure. Supportive parents should know the risks involved before enrolling their child in a youth sport program.
- 5 Supportive parents communicate their true concerns directly with the coach.** A positive working relationship is based on clearly communicated mutual goals among parents, coaches, and athletes. Although parents cannot control the behavior of a coach, they can communicate with the coach regularly about the overall development of their child.
- 6. Supportive parents understand and respect the differences between parental roles and coaching roles.** Both parents and coaches need to understand their rules in supporting the young athlete. Although parents are ultimately responsible for their child's development, once they have chosen a coach, they must leave the coaching to the coach. Even though supportive parents often play sports with their child, they avoid coaching "over the shoulder" of the coach and/or publicly questioning coaching decisions.
- 7. Supportive parents control negative emotions and think positively.** No athletes wish to perform poorly. Negative reactions to poor performance only add to an athlete's pressures. Supportive parents realize that the athlete who "chokes" is trying his/her best to succeed. In fact, part of the problem with many athletes is that they re trying to hard to succeed. Criticizing such athletes will not enhance their performance.
- 8. Supportive parents avoid the use of fear.** The use of punishment and withdrawal of love can pressure kids to perform better. Unfortunately, such strategies tend to trade short-term performance gains for long-term emotional risks to the youngster's health and well-being. Supportive parents recognize that a love for sport is rarely fostered by fear of the consequences of failure.
- 9 Supportive parents avoid criticizing.** Nagging parents often confuse support with constantly reminding the children that they need to practice more, condition more, concentrate more, and so on. Over-involved parents frequently lose their objectivity. They are unable to provide the critical emotional support children need before and during competitive contest.

10. ***Supportive parents recognize and understand expressions of insecurity.*** More often than not, youngsters with high anxiety have parents who are insensitive to their symptoms. When children are nervous, uncertain, or feeling pressure, insensitive parents may trivialize the child's fears or see such concerns as signs of weakness. Supportive parents realize that such expressions are normal and are a call for emotional support.

11. ***Supportive parents avoid the use of guilt.*** "We've done so much for you!" or "The family has given so much for you, the least you could do is take advantage of what we've provided." These are typical remarks of unsupportive parents who use guilt to manipulate their children to perform the way they want them to.

12. ***Supportive parents show empathy for the youth athlete.*** Empathy is an understanding of what the child is feeling and an awareness of the pressures and demands that the sport places on him/her. Empathy is not sympathy or agreement, necessarily, but rather a true understanding that the task is difficult. A sympathetic response to an expression of doubt by the athlete might be "Perhaps you're right. Perhaps it is too difficult. Maybe you shouldn't compete today." On the other hand, a supportive parent might express his empathy for his child's feeling by saying, "Yes, it probably will be a tough competition today. C'mon, let me help you get ready."

## Values Discussions

Your son or daughter has just scored a basket that turns out to be the winning shot. You feel proud, but after the game you're talking with your child and find him a little hesitant. He finally tells you that he had stepped out of bounds just before the last shot. It really shouldn't have counted and his team should have lost.

**How do you feel?**

**What might you say or do?**

■ ■ ■

Your 10-year-old has been playing competitive soccer at the YMCA for four years. In three consecutive games this year his/her team has been beaten easily. After the third time you are driving him/her home and he/she mutters, "I don't know why I bother to play soccer anymore."

**What runs through your mind?**

**What could you say?**

■ ■ ■

You and your son or daughter talk things over pretty often. Your child shares his feelings with you, maybe not easily but regularly. This particular conversation is about his/her closest friend on the team. Your child plays well and usually scores the most points for the team. His/her best friend never plays more than the required 2 quarters and rarely scores. Your son or daughter feels bad about his friend not doing well. He says he even feels guilty about always getting to play the extra quarter.

**What might you do to help you child sort this out?**

■ ■ ■

Your child has played the best game of her life against a team who has been very good all year. With just 10 seconds on the clock, the official calls a foul on him/her and the opponent makes both free throws to win the game. Your child says he/she didn't touch the player, and you believe her.

What do you do?

**What do you do?**

**What would be the likely consequences of your possible action(s) on the game, officials, coach, and your child?**

■ ■ ■

You are at a party with other YMCA Baseball families. You are bothered by what a couple of other parents have to say about the coach. They are belittling him, saying things like, "He doesn't know how to work with my kid," "He's not strict enough," and "He pays too much attention to the best players."

**How do you react to this?**

**What does this kind of conversation do to the kids who hear it?**

■ ■ ■

Your child comes home from the game with a warm-up suit that is not his/hers. He/she tells you, "Everyone was gone and it was just lying there." You ask your child if she thinks this is stealing. He/she replies, "You bring things home from work all the time—paper, folders, pens, tools."

**How might you deal with this?**

**What would be your reaction if you child came home without his/her warm-up suit?**

■ ■ ■

A member of your child's team is very sick. The team has an important game today. There is talk about what should be done, and the options seem to be

- to make the sick child play (he/she is probably just nervous).
- to use the much slower back-up child (he deserves a chance since he works hard in practice), or
- to reshuffle the team to cover the event (the team can get more points this way).

**If you were the parent of the sick child, what would you do?**

**If you were the parent of the back-up child, what would you do?**

**If you were the parent of another team member, what would you do?**

■ ■ ■

## A Letter From a Referee\*

Dear Parents of Players:

I am a referee. I don't do it for a living, but only on Saturdays for fun. I've played the game, coached it, and watched it. But somehow nothing takes the place of refereeing. Maybe it's because I feel that deep down I'm providing a fair chance for all the kids to play the game without disagreements and arguments. With all the fun I've had, there is still something that bothers me about my volunteer refereeing. Some folks don't understand my purpose. Some of you seem to feel I'm out there to exert authority over your child. For that reason, you sometimes yell at me when I make a mistake, or you encourage your child to say things that hurt my feelings. How many of you really understand that I try to be perfect? I try not to make mistakes. I don't want your child to feel he got a bad deal from a referee. Yet no matter how hard I try, I can't be perfect. I counted the calls a referee made in a game one day. The total number of decisions was 146. I'm sure every referee tries to get all the calls right, but some are missed. If you figure that referee's percentage on paper, he could have missed 8 calls and still gotten 95% of the calls right. In most occupations, that percentage would be considered excellent. If you were in school, that grade would receive an A for sure.

But your demands are higher than that. Let me tell you more about my last game. There was a very close call that ended the game. As I was putting on my jacket I overheard one of the parents comment, "It's too bad the kids have to lose games because of rotten referees." Walking to my car I heard a couple of kids telling their friends, "Boy, the referees we lousy today. They lost the game for us." I felt bad when I got home. Here was a group of kids who had made a lot of mistakes that had cost them numerous opportunities to win the game.

The purpose of this YMCA Youth Sports program is to teach skills to young children. When you give a team that does not play well in a game the opportunity to blame the loss on a referee, you are giving that team the chance to remove all responsibility for the loss from their shoulders. Parents or adult leaders who permit young players to blame their failures on a referee (regardless of the quality of that referee) are doing the youngsters an injustice. Rather than learning responsibility, they are learning to foster an improper outlook toward the ideals of the game. This shift of responsibility is bound to carry over to future years.

As I sit here writing this letter, I am no longer as upset as I was this afternoon. I wanted to quit refereeing, but, fortunately, my wife reminded me of another situation that occurred in an earlier game the same day. There was a player who pantomimed his displeasure at any call that was not in his team's favor. You could sense that he wanted the crowd to realize that he was a fine talented player doing his best to win the game and that I was a black-hearted villain working against him. The player continued acting like this throughout the quarter. He was also yelling at his own teammates who dared to make a mistake. At the end of the quarter, the coach called the player aside. In a voice loud enough for me to overhear, the coach's lecture went like this: "Listen, Son, it is time you made a decision. You can be a referee, an actor, or a player. But you can only be one at a time on this team. Right now it is your job to play. And you are basically doing a lousy job. Leave the acting to the actors, the refereeing to the referees, or you won't be playing as well as you can. Now what is it going to be?"

When the game was over, the child walked over to me fighting his hardest to keep back the tears. He apologized for his behavior and thanked me for refereeing his game. He said he had learned a lesson he would never forget.

I can't help wondering how many more fine young children are missing their chance to develop into outstanding players because their parents encourage them to spend time refereeing rather than working harder to play the game as it should be played.

--A Referee

\*From a letter by D. Jenson, 1976, *Washington Journal, Physical Education, and Recreation, Spring 1976*. Copyright 1976 by the Washington Alliance for Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance. Adapted by permission.

## **Young Athlete's Bill of Rights**

Throughout this pamphlet we have de-emphasized the role of winning—especially winning at all costs. We have done so for many reasons, most importantly because stressing victory is not in the best interest of the child. Children need to learn to compete. To treat them as if they are professionals, robs them of growth and childhood. Personal growth and development are of prime concern. The better prepared the young child is for the competitive world, the more successful he or she will be. An obsession with winning can be destructive not only to the less talented but to the exceptionally talented as well. To emphasize our point, we would like you to become acquainted with the *Young Athlete's Bill of Rights*∗:

1. The right to determine when to participate and in what sports and to what degree of intensity and involvement.
2. The right to play in every game no matter what their degree of physical ability or the relative importance of the game in term of league competition.
3. The right to be taught the fundamentals of the sport by a teacher or coach and to play with rules that have been adjusted for children.
4. The right to be coached by those who have been trained in or who have been made aware of the various states of emotional and psychological development in children, and to be treated on a level equivalent to their emotional and physical maturity—not by standards of collegiate or professional sports.
5. The right to have a coach who places the child first, the team second, himself or herself third, and winning fourth; to feel free to laugh after a defeat and to have fun participating even while playing on a losing team; to be able to use play as an opportunity to test life; and not be subjected to adult-imposed pressures to win.
6. The right to have a coach who is patient and supportive, as opposed to one who believes in harsh, negative, “professional” approach; a coach who takes time to work with each athlete, regardless of ability or potential.
7. The right to be treated as a member of a democracy, not a dictatorship, including the freedom to voice opinions openly to the coach without fear of repercussion.
8. The right to play in a safe and supportive atmosphere.
9. The right to report to a coach or parent any physical or emotional concerns such as fear or rejection without fear of ridicule or loss of esteem.
10. The right to freedom from physical and emotional punishment by their parents or the coach. Punishment leads only to fear and inhibition. The purpose of sports should be to help a child grow, feel expansive, and realize his or her potential.

\*From “Bill of Rights for Young Athletes” from *Guidelines for Children’s Sports* (p. 15) by R. Martens and V Seefeldt, 1979, Reston, VA: AAHPERD. Copyright 1979 by The American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. Adapted by permission.

## A Letter From a Parent

Dear Sir:

I want to drop you a line to say how much our son enjoyed his elementary school basketball experience. He hasn’t played basketball before, and we were leery of a “Little League Push” experience for him as a new and young player.

We were delighted that he had two wonderful coaches who had the growth and development of the boys foremost in mind for the entire length of the program. These coaches worked with the boys in a way that allowed them to learn the game and feel good about themselves playing and learning it.

I remember early in the season the kids were playing a game and were behind on the scoreboard. The coaches got them together and said, “Something is wrong here. Forget the score. Are we having fun?” Eleven glum faces lit up and the kids had renewed confidence in playing. My husband and I are so glad that our son had coaches who knew what was important for the kids.

Another aspect we thought was exemplary—all the kids played. Regardless of their ability or the scoreboard, there were no permanent benchwarmers.

Our son grew a lot thanks to the Y basketball program. We hate to see it and (except for the 7 a.m. games, of course). We can’t thank the people enough who made it possible.

--A Happy Parent

## How Are Children Placed On Teams?

This is a question raised often by parents who perceive an apparent difference in skill levels between teams. We have tried a number of systems: holding a draft, watching and evaluating all players, allowing coaches to select teams, or having the site director place players at random to achieve an equal number of players from different grade levels on each team.

**No matter which system is used, some teams have still not been competitive.**

Our YMCA will be using a random draft method. In some programs an evaluation type draft will be used. Requests to be placed on teams with friends will be considered by the Program Director.

### **YMCA Youth Sports Important Information**

1. Upon completion of registration forms and payment of fee, your child will be placed on a team.
2. Some time before the first practice your child's coach will let you know when practices will be held. This time will remain the same for the entire season.
3. A detailed game schedule will be provided prior to the first game.
4. Please pick up your child immediately after practice. It's not fair for the coach to have to wait with your child until you arrive.

In the event that any program must be cancelled for any reason, as much advance notice as possible will be given.

**The YMCA.  
It's for all of you.**