

Persuasive blog Years 10 - 12: Single blog entry

SEE WHAT SUSIE SAYS:

**Does winning matter in sport?**

By Susie O'Brien

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You've probably heard of famous Green Bay Packers coach Vince Lombardi who once said: "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing". This might apply in the battle for the Ashes, but should it apply to ten-year-old team sports? The issue of whether kids should play sport to have fun or to win is being hotly debated this week.

It all started with Justin Byrne, the coach of the under-tens boys' team at Chalfont St Peter's Football Club. The ex-pat Aussie took over the voluntary coaching role a few weeks ago and lost no time in sending out his manifesto to parents. "I am only interested in winning. I don't care about equal play time or any other communist view of sport," he wrote. "Those that are not as good need to work harder or demonstrate more during training, or change sports". And: "You are not doing your son any favours by suggesting the world is fair or non-competitive". I have some sympathy for this approach, although I don't agree with everything he says. There is absolutely nothing wrong with competition among kids at club sport level.

Losing is a valuable life lesson for kids. As long as it is handled the right way, it spurs them on to try harder next time. I also have no problem with individual grading and merit-based medals. It doesn't hurt kids to be assessed according to their abilities. Kids are smart: they generally know for themselves how good (or bad) they are anyway. I understand this this hard line is a little challenging for some.

Indeed, Mr Byrne was sacked within days of sending out his email. Club officials told the media that it was just a "friendly village football club" and kids just wanted to "have fun". The same debate is taking place in just about every clubhouse, every sports ground and every oval in this country as well. But I think there is starting to be a major backlash against the notion that all kids are equal and it's all okay as long as they're "having fun". Too often

Introduction to the blog with profile of the author provided

Title

Author

Date of posting

Provides some contextualising information on the issue to introduce the piece

Contention stated

Use of first person

“having fun” means kids ruin it for everyone else by slacking off and not putting in any effort. This is where Mr Byrne is wrong to put all the emphasis on winning: effort is by far more important.

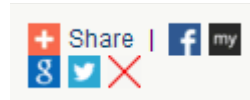
Even if they’re not star players, kids who put in the effort should be rewarded with equal game time and a spot on the team. I don’t care whether my kids’ teams lose every game and come at the bottom of the ladder every week. But they must make an effort for every minute they’re on the court or on the field. I have no time for kids who don’t try, and don’t really want to be there. Too often, competitive sport is used as babysitting by parents who just want their kids off the couch on Saturdays. Weekend sport shouldn’t be a free-for-all that rewards kids who can barely manage to turn up.

Those who can’t be bothered listening to the coaches, or who are just there to keep their parents happy, should just go home. They should switch to an individual sport like athletics, and stop taking up valuable space in teams. It all comes down to kids respecting the teams they play for, and being treated with respect in return.

This is another area where Mr Byrne has clearly got a lot to learn. While competition is good, he should know that when you pit kid against kid in a nasty game of junior Survivor, you are unlikely to get the best out of your players. When kids are berated and humiliated they don’t try harder, they just give up. You also have to be fair consistent; the fact that Mr Byrne admitted he was only coaching so his son had a place on the team hasn’t won him many friends.

In the end, most kids should be able to cope with the challenge and rigour of competitive sport – as long as they’re rewarded for effort as well as excellence. The lesser known, but more important, maxim from Vince Lombardi is: “Winning is not everything, but making the effort to win is.

11 comments |



Attacks parents

Use of comparisons and exclusive language

Use of emotive language

Re-states position on the issue

Concludes with a quote which links back to one from the introduction

From:

<http://blogs.news.com.au/heraldsun/seewhatsusiesays/> Retrieved 8/12/2013