



Does sports build character?

As someone that had kids playing youth soccer, I had another goal for them. My goal was that their involvement in soccer would help to build their character in positive ways. I wanted them to learn to cooperate with others, work together for a common goal, respond appropriately to victory and defeat, and grow in virtues like courage, humility, patience, and perseverance. This seems naive, given not only the headlines involving star athletes involved in illegal drugs, assaults, and cheating by using performance-enhancing drugs, but also the behavior of coaches, parents, and players in youth sports. I started to ask myself, does sports build character?

It seems to me that participation in sports can build character, but it doesn't just happen, we must be intentional about it. Parents and coaches need to demonstrate through their words and actions the values of sports that translate well into daily life, including respect for oneself and others, fairness, grace in defeat, humility in victory, and the virtue of self-denial.

But how can this be accomplished?

We must also continue to grow Character Development for each player, so they will not only learn the skill of playing soccer, but also a new character lesson each week. Then we must come together as a community and continue to challenge them to live each character lesson at home and on the field.

Here are few stories that I want to share with you that fuel me to continue to drive character development:

1. The first story reported on a pair of high school coaches in Missouri who took their girls' and boys' cross-country teams to a fictitious meet in California, even making up results that were reported in the town paper. (A parent then challenged the results.) The coaches were fired. It was not clear whether the students were asked to lie about the meet.
2. The second story reported on a teen who assaulted a four-year-old in a fast food restaurant after the little boy accidentally got ice cream on her sleeve. The girl was 18 years old and almost nine months pregnant. She chased the child across the restaurant, pinned him in a headlock and smeared hot fries in his face, all the while screaming obscenities. The young woman was sentenced to 18 months in jail, with all but four days suspended contingent upon her taking anger management and parenting classes.
3. The last story featured a teen football star who insisted his record-breaking pass not be recognized in Illinois record books after he discovered that his coach and the opposing team had agreed on a plan to make it possible. He has (deservedly) been celebrated by the media since that time. But should it have ever gotten to the point where he had to serve as role model for the adults?

These may be extreme examples, but they make it difficult to shrug off the efforts of sports programs to teach values. It may be time to take it to next level when it comes to building character. When it comes to our curriculum and method of encouraging character, it will only be as strong as our ability to come together as parents and coaches to be intentional about our children living these lessons out, on and off the field.

Here is how our character development works:

At the end of each practice you will see your child join the team and coach in small huddle. This is when the lesson will be shared with your child's team and then the coach will revisit the lesson again on game day. After the lesson at the end of practice, your child is encouraged to take the card home after practice and review it with you. Then once they do that they are supposed to turn in their card of the week on Saturday, to enter a drawing to win a prize. We ask that you sign the card and put your child's name and team name on the card, so we know who the winner is, if they get picked.



These lessons will be the following:

#### WEEK 1 - SPORTSMANSHIP

Sportsmanship is an ambition or philosophy that a sport or activity will be enjoyed for its own sake, with proper consideration for fairness, ethics, respect, and a sense of fellowship with one's competitors.

#### WEEK 2 - TEAMWORK

Teams made of great players that do not know how to work together do not necessarily win. Participating on a team, whether as a coach, manager, trainer, or player, is a privilege that carries great responsibility. Each member must do his or her part to serve others. The same principle is true in every area of life. Using our gifts and talents for the good of our family, teammates, fellow students and neighbors for the good of all.

#### WEEK 3 - ATTITUDE

Having a positive attitude is "putting my whole heart into what I do." Whatever the task, no matter how big or small, it will always turn out better if you put your whole heart into it!

Another great thing about a positive attitude is—it's contagious! Your "spark" of energy and excitement can ignite others to live their lives with enthusiasm.

#### WEEK 4 - SELF-CONTROL

Self-Control is "doing what is right, even when I don't feel like it."

Imagine riding in a car that is out of control. It can be frightening and very dangerous! This is self-control is like having steering and brakes in the journey of life. It means saying "no" to some things, in order to say "yes" to something better—something that can help you reach your goals!

#### WEEK 5 - RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility begins with "little things" like taking care of your belongings, playing with a good attitude, resolving problems peacefully, and owning up to mistakes. Taking responsibility in these "little things" prepares us for greater opportunities in the future.

## WEEK 6 - COURAGE

Courage is “overcoming fear so I can do what is right.”

Courage begins by knowing what is good, true, and right. This gives you confidence that you are heading in the right direction.

Another way to build courage is to think through what you should do in specific situations. For example, what should you do if you wake up and hear a smoke alarm in your home? What should you do if a stranger asks you to get into his car? What should you do if you see someone being teased or bullied?

Thinking ahead will help you overcome fear and make better choices when you face strange, difficult, or frightening situations.

## WEEK 7 - COMPASSION

Compassion is “helping those who are hurting.”

Compassion begins with sympathy, which is seeing someone’s pain. It is noticing a teammate who skins his knee or a friend who hurts her arm. It is being alert to teammate or coach who needs assistance.

## WEEK 8 - RESPECT

Respect is “treating others with honor and dignity.”

Everyone has worth and dignity as a human being, whether they are young or old, rich or poor, male or female, or any other difference. Therefore, you should treat others with honor, dignity, and courtesy instead of bullying, harassing, or manipulating in order to get what you want.

Does sports build character? It can with the right program, coach and parent coming together for our children’s future.

We also want to take a moment to congratulate last week’s Character Card Winners! Great Job to all the players!

- ⚽ L. Giglio U8 Coach Jazmyn Whitecaps
- ⚽ Z. Scheidegger U8 Coach Marco Dynamo
- ⚽ B. Haggard U10 Coach Marco Real Betis
- ⚽ E. Venter U10 Coach Sal Sporting

- ⚽ K. Williams U12 Coach Matt Aston Villa
- ⚽ Rupesh Senthil U12 Coach Matt Aston Villa
- ⚽ K. Gillman U14 Coach Ethan Empoli
- ⚽ M. Pozo U14 Coach Marco Sampdoria

Please stop by the front desk to pick up your prize next time you’re here.

Thank you for taking the time to read our weekly newsletters.

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