



# FAMILIES IN SPORT: FINDING THE BALANCE

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

"MY DAD NEVER PUSHED ME but the big thing is that HE HELPED ME by going out in the backyard and playing with me." — Bart STARR, former NFL Quarterback

"No matter what accomplishments you make, SOMEBODY HELPED YOU." — Althea GIBSON, former Pro Tennis Player

**IT'S HARD TO RESIST.** We're competitive by nature. We want our kids to win. But why do we want it so much? And for whom? And how far will we go to ensure that they do? And what happens when they don't? Or what if they don't want it as much as we do? The early returns are bad: out-of-control parents, 11-year-olds burnt out from the pressure, whole weekends devoured by travel teams and tournaments. Maybe it's time to go old school. Maybe it's time to plan a couple more sit down dinners, a few more Saturdays at home, some after school pick-up games with no adults allowed.

## SOME LESSONS YOUR CHILDREN COULD BE LEARNING IN ORDER TO WIN IN SPORTS...

### ...WHAT IS "SAID"

"Don't worry, the official didn't see it."

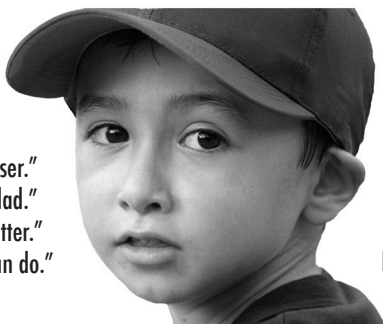
"I am yelling to motivate you."

"Second place is the first loser."

"Make us proud; do it for dad."

"Everyone plays; winning doesn't matter."

"They are volunteers; that's the best we can do."



### WHAT IS HEARD...

*Cheat to succeed; people and character don't really matter.*

*Fear and shame work really well to motivate you.*

*There is no value for effort, teamwork, and growth, only the scoreboard.*

*I am most happy when you win; you are not worthy when you fail.*

*Effort, performance, and goals don't matter for anything.*

*We are unconcerned about who influences you.*

## FAMILY TAKE-HOMESTEST

1. How many times a week does my family eat dinner together at home?
2. When was the last time my kid played a game without an adult coaching, refereeing, or otherwise watching?
3. Does my kid know how to play "500" or "Pickle" or "Horse"?
4. Has my child ever played wiffleball?
5. How many times have I interrupted a sports "season" to take the family on a vacation?
6. Have I ever teased, put down, or avoided speaking to my kid if she didn't perform well?
7. Do I make critical comments in front of my children about the coaches, the refs, the opposing players?
8. Is my mood based on whether my kid wins?
9. Can I play catch or shoot baskets with my kid without coaching her?
10. Have I ever withheld affection from my kid if he didn't perform well?

## TIPS FOR FAMILY SUCCESS

### DO YOUR HOMEWORK

What do you know about the coach or the program? Is there a healthy balance between skill development, character, and winning? How does he/she motivate? Discipline? Encourage? Are you willing to help in order to bring balance?

### CONSIDER THE COST OF TIME AND MONEY

Is your child in the 1% category of being an elite athlete? Is there a higher premium on sports than the other arts? Does this provide quality family time together? Could the time and money be more meaningfully spent?

### PROTECT YOUR CHILD

Do you excuse certain behavior from coaches that you wouldn't from other parents and teachers? Is there enough free time and down time for dreaming, playing, relaxing, talking? Is this more for your child or for you?

### PURSUE ALTERNATIVES

Do your children truly love what they play by practicing on their own? If not, keep it recreational. Are you willing to replace some organized sports for good pick-up games... at your home?

