



# Coach of the Year

Robins (Ga.) AFB's Donald Wendland, the NYSCA Coach of the Year, makes every practice fun, educational and competitive – just one of many reasons why parents continually request him to be their child's coach every season.

By Adam Shilling

**Robins Air Force Base Youth Sports (Georgia) judges the effectiveness of their youth sports coaches on feedback they receive from parents and children in the program.**

So when it came time to nominate a volunteer coach for the National Youth Sports Coaches Association's (NYSCA) prestigious Coach of the Year Award, it simply turned to their many satisfied customers.

Without hesitation, community members pointed to Donald Wendland.

It's easy to see why.

"For all the teams he has coached, the players come back season after season and parents request that he coach their kids every season," said Ronald K. Hayes, director of youth sports and fitness for Robins Air Force Base Youth Sports. "He not only teaches them the game of soccer, he demonstrates good sportsmanship at all times, whether winning or losing. He also explains the rules to the kids by breaking them down to simple parts."

## SIMPLY THE BEST

While nominations poured in from around the country for all the outstanding work so many wonderful volunteer coaches are performing, Wendland stood out above everyone else, earning him the NYSCA Volunteer Coach of the Year award.

He received the award during the 8th annual NAYS Youth Sports Congress in Orlando, Fla. Each year NYSCA presents the Coach of the Year award to one individual who embodies everything that a volunteer coach should be all about. It's someone who places the emotional and physical well-being of players ahead of any personal desire to win; who treats each player as an individual; who is an enthusiastic team leader and a positive role model; who has a thorough knowledge of the techniques and rules of the sport they're coaching; and who understands that they can use their role as a coach to influence so many other areas of a child's life; among other areas.

"The coach makes a big difference on the kids," said Wendland. "The kids remember almost everything the

coach says. What the kids keep coming back for is the positive feelings they have for the coach and the practices. If the feelings are negative they might quit that season and not want to come back next season."

According to Hayes, Wendland's methods stand out because of the way in which he communicates with the children in his care. Wendland avoids the common mistake that many youth sports coaches make of losing perspective and forgetting that players are children first, athletes second.


"I know I may have some future soccer stars or kids that just want to play," Wendland said. "I try and make every practice fun, educational and competitive. If I can get the kids to accomplish those three things then they will have reached what I call the 'enjoyment of the game.'"

## PERFECT BALANCE

Wendland has been a coach for the Robins Youth Soccer Association (RYSA) for the past five years, where he regularly coaches anywhere from one to three teams per season. Along with his coaching duties, Wendland has served on the RYSA committee as vice president for one year and as president for the past three years.

"He always goes beyond his duties by asking if there is anything that needs to be done to the fields to get them ready for games or practices," Hayes said. "He is a valued coach."

Along with the countless nights and weekends spent on the field coaching, Wendland devotes several hours a week performing his duties as league president. Wendland is responsible for disseminating information from the youth center to all parents and coaches, as well as organizing teams for all age groups.

"He is very effective in teaching the kids the fundamentals of the game," Hayes said. "He teaches by example when demonstrating drills, or the way he behaves around the kids. Most importantly, Don always makes practices fun to the point that even after an hour and half practice the kids can't believe that practice is over already and can't wait for the next practice." 



**Donald Wendland, the NYSCA Coach of the Year, is beloved at Robins (Ga.) AFB for his passion for making a positive difference in his players' lives.**

*Photo courtesy of TSS Photography*

## Nominate that special coach or parent today!

Nominations for the 2010 NYSCA Coach of the Year and Parent of the Year are now being accepted. To submit nominations, visit [www.nays.org](http://www.nays.org). For coaches, click on "Coaches" on the left hand side and then "Coach of the Year" and for parents click on "Parents" on the left hand side and then "Parent of the Year." Or request a nomination form via email at [nays@nays.org](mailto:nays@nays.org). Winners receive round trip flight and accommodations for them and a guest to San Diego for the awards ceremony during the annual Youth Sports Congress on Dec. 1-4, as well as a variety of other prizes.