



# Introduction to Coaching Youth Sports

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## **CHAPTER 3 – TEACHING GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP**

**BEN BECKER:** Now youth sports bring together a wide variety of personalities – from the volunteer coaches and the parents in the stands to the actual kids themselves. So it's not just coaches who lose control of their emotions. We see it happen with players far too often, too, who not only display poor sportsmanship but behave inappropriately and disrespect officials. Ultimately, the behavior of your players is a direct reflection on you. It's your job to teach good sportsmanship, stress it at all times and address any displays of poor sportsmanship the moment you see them. First, we'll take a look at a clip of the ultimate display of poor sportsmanship – a player punching another during a post-game handshake line – and then you'll hear from some well-known coaches on how you can ensure that good sportsmanship is continually stressed by you and displayed by your players.

**MIKE KRZYZEWSKI:** I think the best way a coach can teach youngsters about sportsmanship, whether it's after a win or after a loss, is by how they act. You know what they say – you lead them by the hand a little bit and I still do it with my Duke team. If we have a big game I say be humble. I have said it with our Olympic team, be humble. When you win other people will say good things about you and if you lose don't make excuses. Take responsibility and give credit to the winner. Give credit to the team that won because hopefully you'll be in that position in the future if you take care of business the right way.



**JOHN HARBAUGH:** People talk about sportsmanship being a tough thing or tricky thing. To me it is a piece of cake. I mean how hard is it? You know everyone wants to talk about all the bad examples on TV but how many good examples do you see? And maybe they aren't always the things that get played over and over again on Sportscenter but you're a coach and you're supposed to be looking for those. Did you see the NBA playoffs last night? Did you see what happened after the game when LeBron went over and shook someone else's hand, or didn't shake someone's hand? How would you handle that situation? You know it's your team, these are your players and it's your opportunity to teach your lessons and your values. You're not beholden to what they see on TV. Find the good stuff and throw away the bad stuff. Make sure they understand that being a good teammate and being a good sportsman is as important as anything you do in life. And down the road when they are competing for a job or competing for a sale they will understand how important that is.

**BEN BECKER:** And, because we all know that our actions speak louder than any words and that kids will model their behavior after what they see from their coaches, keep the following statement in mind from Coach Mark Richt about how your players will behave whenever you feel yourself getting upset:

**MARK RICHT:** They listen to what you say but they remember what you do.

**BEN BECKER:** That is a great point Coach Richt makes. Also sharing some valuable insight on this important topic is Dr. Mary Sara Wells and Dr. Skye Arthur-Banning. Here's what they had to say:

**DR. MARY SARA WELLS:** I think just pointing them out when they happen because they happen all the time and people don't focus on it; they need to encourage them. If a player falls down from the other team tell your team to help them up or thank the other team if they do something nice. Just little things make a big difference.



**DR. SKYE ARTHUR-BANNING:** I like hearing the coaches cheering for some positive activity on the other team. Your kid made a great shot or your goalie made a great save. I think that begins to resonate with your players that as a coach I can be in a competition, I can work as hard as I can work but still appreciate the athletic ability and the talents of the other team without getting upset with myself for not scoring. That positive attitude parents can see and start to cheer for the other team when they have done something well. It's ok to clap for the other players after they have been injured and they get up and to have general respect for the other team that the coach can outlay to everyone on both teams.