



Excerpt from *Coaching for Character*

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1997

ISBN 978-0-88011-512-4

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A Challenge to Reflect

Most of you probably already attempt to instill the values of sportsmanship in your players. But how important is it in your coaching? Do your players exhibit sportsmanlike behavior? Do you? Here are some questions that might help you reflect on your own experience. These questions are meant to challenge you to look squarely at your own sense of what really matters to you as a coach. Write out your answers.

- Who are the coaches I most respect? Why do I respect them? What qualities do they have that I most admire?
- How do I want to be remembered by my athletes? How will they think of me later in life? Will I have made some difference in their lives? Will they want their children to play for me?
- Am I the kind of coach I would want my children to play for? If not, why?
- Which of my former coaches do I most admire? Which of my former coaches do I least admire? Why?
- Do I care most about being liked or being respected by my players? Do my players like me? Respect me? Neither? Both?

Respect Starts with You

Don't underestimate the extent to which players make judgments about their coaches. Because of your behavior, your players know that you approve of some things and disapprove of others. They know that you have certain values. What values are you conveying to your players? Answer the following questions honestly. Ask yourself why you do or don't engage in these practices.

- Do you allow your players to "talk trash" to opponents?
- Do you allow your players to respond to an officiating call with angry displays of temper?
- Do you let your players "showboat," or display "excessive celebration" after they do something positive?
- Do you ever yell or scream at players?
- If you do yell or scream at players, do you do it when they perform poorly or when they behave in an unsportsmanlike manner?
- Would you allow your team to depart after a game without shaking the opponents' hands?
- Have you ever blamed a loss on an official (especially when talking to your players after the game)?
- Have you ever made excuses for losing a game?
- Would you attempt to intimidate an official in order to get a favorable call?
- Would you get into a heated argument with an official in order to motivate your team?
- Would you promote animosity between two teammates to motivate them?
- Would you run up the score on a team for any reason?
- Do you ever call your players names in a way that demeans them or publicly embarrasses them?
- Do you treat your players differently after a loss than after a win?
- Do you punish or reward your players as a result of whether the team won or lost a match or game, without regard for the effort they put out?

Go back through each of the questions and ask yourself, regardless of what you actually do, whether you condone or condemn the practice. And then ask yourself what reasons you have for each judgment. If you're willing to reflect on the reasons behind your actions and attitudes, you're creating an opportunity to be more reflective about what you do as a coach and how you will impact your athletes for years to come.