

The 7th Inning Stretch

LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL CANADA



PARENT RAGE IN YOUTH SPORTS: WHY IS IT HAPPENING?

Article taken from the *Little League International Publication "The Coach's Box"*

By Darrell J. Burnett, Ph. D.

Over the years I have been interviewed by Sports Illustrated, CNN, ESPN, and others on the topic of parent behavior in youth sports. While the behavior of the vast majority of youth sports parents presents no problems, there are, nevertheless, a certain small percentage of parents who "lose it" at youth sports events.

There are some who say the percentage is increasing. Regardless, I think we need to understand why some parents are "losing it" in youth sports today. To do that, I think we have to "get into the shoes" of parents who have kids in sports.

Off hand, I can think of six aspects of a parents' world today that may shed some light on why some parents get over involved, or tend to over-react in youth sports.

1. Youth sports are no longer "Just a game." Media barrages parents with the lure of publicity for their kids in sports on TV, in newspapers, in magazines. Kids' names and pictures are in local newspapers, with scores, statistics of teams, etc. Travel teams and club teams are growing, because parents are being told that if their kid doesn't play on a travel or club team, the kid will have less of a chance to make it on a good high school team, and less of a chance to get a college scholarship.

All-Star teams are becoming more important in parents' eyes because it's the "All Stars" on a kid's resumé that gives him/her a better chance to make the club or travel teams.

Scholarship talk gets parents excited about the possibility of having college paid for. Professional contracts are talked about and written about in

the newspapers, noting the local kid who is now playing pro ball.

With all these things going on, it's hard for parents to see youth sports as just a game. Instead, they see youth sports as a step toward scholarships and a life as a professional athlete.

2. End Product vs Process

Adults tend to emphasize end products, rather than process. So, when they go to a game, they emphasize hits, runs, errors, and of course, winning. For some parents, there is no room for second place.

This is also reflected in our society. In a recent Olympics, when the USA women's soccer team won the silver medal, the headlines read "Settling for Silver." That's why, when a mistake occurs, some parents can't see the big picture, only the negative end product. They're also thinking, "What if a scout is in the stands?"

3. Misplaced Self Esteem

Some parents relate to their athletic children in such a way that their child's self esteem is totally connected to his/her athletic achievement. So, at a game, if the kid makes an error, some parents see it as tragic because they don't relate to their kid as a person who happens to be an athlete. They relate to their kid solely as an athlete. An error or a bad call is tragic in the eyes of parents if they see their child's worth only in terms of a sporting event.

Also, some parents' self esteem is tied in with having an athletic son or daughter. Her victory is their victory. Her mistake is their mistake. His lack of playing time is their lack of playing time.

4. The Myth of Anger

I think some parents "lose it" at games because they somehow believe they have to "let off steam"

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Teaching For Tomorrow. Little League Baseball Canada Education Program	2
2011 Tournament Schedule And Results (Updated)	5

Continued on page 4...

Remember...If it isn't fun...it isn't Little League!

TEACHING FOR TOMORROW LITTLE LEAGUE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Article by Al Herback - National Coach - Little League Baseball Canada

Fall Ball And Winter Programs

Harvest is almost over and it is time to enjoy the sights of autumn. The changing of foliage to the incredible reds, yellows, and oranges never fails to surprise and delight us! There has already been a change from summer sports to winter programs. In a month or so, snow will be covering most of Canada which is not always a welcomed sight, but out of our control.

However, some great things have happened, are happening and will be happening throughout the winter months. Baseball will continue to be played in various parts of Canada. Fall ball is a very popular program and, for many areas as well, winter programs are becoming very popular for cities that offer baseball throughout the winter for the many players wishing to hone their skills year round.

Fall ball is an exciting time for those children who are lucky enough to have a district organize a program in which they can participate. Some of the nicest days weather-wise are in August

and September. These areas rely on the outstanding support given to them by volunteers who are willing to organize and instruct the program. For most, they begin mid-August and operate until the end of September. For the most part, their agenda is basically the same with emphasis placed on rotating the players through skill stations specifically chosen each night with some type of game at practice end.

The winter programs are generally run with a minimal charge to cover the cost of the facility and for services rendered by the instructors. These programs are becoming readily available throughout Canada with many opting out of other sports to continue with baseball. With a bit of juggling, some children are fortunate to play another winter sport along with fall ball or indoor winter training.

I had sent out a blanket message for anyone willing to do a small write-up of a program they may be offering. I will share some of the responses that I received back from participating districts.

Calgary, Alberta. Valley Ridge Learning the Game Program. This program is supported by the Valley Ridge Commu-

nity Association, the Valley Ridge Golf and Country Club, and the numerous volunteer coaches and on field assistants. In 2009, then Sports Director Suzanne Brett-Welsh added t-ball to the associations sports offering. She had been part of the board that approved the purchase of the t-ball equipment in the late 1990s. The equipment had been sitting idle for many years and the board was keen to get it back in service. Greg Quinn was the out-going treasurer and he took the lead in organizing the now Learning the Game fall ball league for children aged 4, 5 and 6 who had not played any higher level of baseball. The association provided the equipment and a small budget. The league is now in its third year and has 29 children registered on four teams. The league runs from late August until early October and plays from 5:45 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. Monday and Wednesday nights. The goal of the league is to provide the kids with a safe and fun environment to learn basic baseball skills. The group is run 100% by volunteers and the registration fee is only \$30 per player to cover the cost of the field

Continued on page 3...



The Little League Pledge

I Trust In God
I Love My Country
And Will Respect It's
Laws
I will Play Fair
And Strive To Win
But Win Or Lose
I Will Always
Do My Best

Continued from page 2...

rental, medals, and the end of the season ice cream social.

I personally was given an invitation to attend one of the evenings. I worked with a group from station to station and then sat back and truly enjoyed the game that followed and the smiles on the faces of the players, coaches, and parents.

Calgary, Alberta. Fish Creek Little League offering a Playing the Game Program. Mike Doyle, President of Fish Creek Little League is the one most responsible for the organization and success of the program. Several coaches assisted Mike to work with the players who signed up for this special fall ball for extra fun and games. This year, the program was specifically for the 12 year old players and played on 80 foot diamonds located at the Trico Leisure Center. It was to prepare these players who will become members of the Junior Program in 2012. As this is a crucial transition period for these major graduates, these instructional and game situations will be invaluable for these players and will get them familiarized with the 80 foot diamonds. As well, the many skills that don't often come into play in majors such as lead-offs, pitcher set position, and coverage responsibilities, emphasis on double plays and much more will be introduced. It is a very successful program and will take a lot of pressure off the coaches as these players will be familiar with much that was taught when becoming a member of their new teams next spring.

Edmonton, Alberta. Confederation Park Playing the Game. Under the leadership of Andy Kaulbach, Confederation Park has been operating a successful fall ball program for two years. Last year it was two teams (one major and one junior). This year we have five which now includes two minors, two majors and one junior.

The goal is to play inter-squad and exhibition games on weekends with other fall ball associations which sometimes creates a challenge. We do, however, make it work with our five teams by just moving players around to make play competitive. Included with the program are practices twice a week with the length of the practice depending on the sunlight decides no more outside practices. The teams then move inside once a week as part of the fall camp that may continue throughout the winter months. This always depends on available space and volunteer coaches. We are extremely happy with the increase in players taking part each year which tells us to continue.

As long as the players continue to support the efforts of our great volunteers running the program, fall ball will be a permanent fixture in Confederation Park.

Little Mountain Little League, Vancouver, BC. Steve Gustavson, DA, has listed the coaches and organizers of this year's fall ball volunteers which include Jerry Atamanchuk, Pat Chaba, Chris Crossfield, Kevin Smith and Bruce Verchere.

The focus for our fall ball program is to host players from every corner of the district who are eligible to play majors in 2012. Most of the players attending these sessions are from Little Mountain and Dunbar. Players sign up and are randomly assigned to teams each week and games are played Sunday morning at the Little Mountain's home field. Every league within our district arranges some sort of training during the off season for players and Kerrisdale Little League and Jericho Little League at times will hire organizations to provide clinics for players not necessarily limited to majors.

These programs should be a developmental, fun league where players are encouraged to try various positions. Winning should always be secondary to the many other values of fall ball.

Congratulations to all of the above districts that give our children that extra time in late summer and fall to enjoy another few games of this great game of baseball! Not only will these players have an opportunity to practice and play for experienced coaches, but in a nice relaxed atmosphere. We know there are many, many more cities with fall and winter programs, so next year I will need to give everyone much more notice to showcase their program to everyone in Canada.

If you wish to contact me or wish to call me for any reason, please call 403-273-4656 or email at al.herback@gmail.com.

“When the One Great Scorer comes to write against your name, He marks, not that you won or lost, but how you played the game.” - Grantland Rice, 1908

Continued from page 1...

when they get angry. They believe they shouldn't hold it in. And yet, research (Anger, the Misunderstood Emotion, by Carol Tavris) shows that the more we express anger, the angrier we get.

5. Retaliation vs. Negotiation

Many parents are living in a world where retaliation is seen as the only option when someone irritates you.

"Don't get mad, Get even!" bumper stickers abound. There's very little talk about negotiating solutions to problems. So, when someone gets in their face or irritates them, they automatically think in terms of retaliation. Take a look at all the arcade games, with names like Intimidator, Terminator, Avenger, Warrior, etc. Ever see one called the "Negotiator?" I don't think so.

6. No Negative Consequences.

In motivation studies, it is clear that behavior is a function of its consequence. That is, if you want to increase a behavior, make sure a person experiences something positive afterwards. If you want to decrease a behavior, make sure a person experiences something negative afterwards.

But, the key word is experience. At the present time, parents don't seem to be experiencing any significantly negative consequences for their out of control behavior at youth sports games. They know that acting out in the workplace or on the highway can result in significant legal consequences. Not so, at youth sports events.

Parent Rage: What Can We Do About It?

I think there are three components when it comes to helping parents to

avoid "losing it" in youth sports: 1) Parent Education 2) Behavioral Expectations and 3) Consequences for Behaviors.

Parent Education

Parents need to be educated as to the value of youth sports just as a game. They need to understand how youth sports can help build a child's self esteem. They need to relate to their athlete as a person first, an athlete second. (See my book, *It's Just a Game! Youth, Sports, and Self Esteem: A Guide for Parents*, published by Authors Choice Press, at iUniverse.com).

Parents need to understand the odds of athletic scholarships and professional athletic career, not to discourage them from hoping, but to help them set realistic expectations. Parents need to understand that top athletes don't concentrate on trophies. Rather, they focus on developing skills, regardless of their win-loss records.

Finally, parents need to understand the mechanics of anger, and to learn some techniques for anger management.

Behavioral Expectations

Parents need specific lists of examples of Good Sportsmanship (see the websites, www.internationalsport.com. National Sportsmanship Day), & www.littleleague.org).

In addition, parents need specific lists of misconduct.

Consequences for Behaviors

Parents should be praised and noted for their good sportsmanship. In some leagues, sportsmanship awards given to teams include parental behavior at games.

Parents should be given a specific list of consequences for misconduct: removal from premises, removal from league, legal consequences for abusive and/or assaultive behaviors, etc.

Ideally, parents should sign an agreement before the season begins. (Contact the National Alliance for Youth Sports, www.nays.org, or Positive Coaching Alliance, www.positivecoach.org, for samples.)

Finally, leagues should have a "game plan" for following through with consequences for misconduct.

Conclusion

Youth Sports coaches and administrators would do well to understand the "why" of parent overreaction in youth sports, and they would do well to set up a system of behavioral expectations, with consequences, for all parents involved in youth sports.

I think this process is well underway in organized youth sports.

*Dr. Darrell Burnett is a clinical psychologist and certified sports psychologist specializing in youth sports. He has been in private practice in Laguna Niguel, California for more than 20 years. He was listed among the "Top 100 Most Influential Sports Educators in America" by the Institute for International Sport. His book, *It's Just a Game! (Youth, Sports, & Self Esteem: A Guide for Parents)*, and his *Sportsmanship Card Game, Good Sport!* are described at his website, www.djburnett.com, along with his other books, booklets, and CDs on youth sports and family life.*



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LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL CANADA 2011 BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE AND RESULTS

Baseball**Major (Little League):**

World Series: Winner, Ocean View LL, Huntington, California

Canadian Championship: Winner, Langley LL

Divisionals:

Atlantic: Winner, Sydney And District LL

Quebec: Winner, Valleyfield LL

Ontario: Winner, Toronto High Park LL

Prairies: Winner, Calgary Rocky Mountain LL

British Columbia: Winner, Langley LL

Junior:

World Series: Winner, Palma Ceia LL, Tampa, Florida

Canadian Championship: Winner, Whalley LL

Divisionals:

Atlantic: Winner, Sydney And District #1 LL

Quebec: Winner, Drummondville LL

Ontario: Winner, Orleans LL

Saskatchewan: Winner, Kiwanis National LL

Prairies: Winner, Medicine Hat LL

British Columbia: Winner, Whalley LL

Senior:

World Series: Hilo LL, Hilo, Hawaii

Canadian Championship: Winner, NDG LL

Divisionals:

Atlantic: Winner, Sydney Mines LL

Quebec: Winner, NDG LL

Ontario: Winner, Windsor West LL

Prairies: Winner, Kiwanis National LL

British Columbia: Winner, Lower Fraser Valley

Big League:

World Series: Winner, District 7, South Carolina

Canadian Championship: Winner, Lethbridge LL, Alta D1

Divisionals:

Atlantic: Host, District 1, Cape Breton, NS

Quebec: Winner, District 2, St. Constant

Ontario: Winner, District 2, Ottawa West

Prairies: Winner, District 1, Calgary

British Columbia: Winner, District 3, Fraser Valley

Softball**Major (Little League):**

World Series: Winner, Sterling LL, Sterling, Illinois

Canadian Championship: Winner, Windsor South LL

Divisionals:

Ontario: TBD

Prairies: TBD

British Columbia: TBD

Junior:

World Series: Winner, Croswell Lexington LL, Croswell, Michigan

Canadian Championship: Winner, Layritz LL

Divisionals:

Ontario: TBD

Prairies: TBD

Senior:

World Series: Winner, Laurel LL, Laurel, Delaware

Canadian Championship: Winner, District 5, Windsor

Divisionals: None

Big League:

World Series: Winner, District 9, Michigan

Canadian Championship: Winner, District 5, Windsor

Divisionals: TBD

The Little League Parent / Volunteer Pledge:

I will teach all children to play fair and do
their best

I will positively support all managers,
coaches and players

I will respect the decisions of the umpires

I will praise a good effort despite the out-
come of the game

If anyone has information that can help to fill in the blanks...dates, District or League hosts, for any of the above, please email me with the details so I can update this page...thestretch@littleleague.ca

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