



Give Kids Slack as Seasons Change

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The acronym “SCORE” in TeamScore represents: Sports Creates Opportunities to Respect and Encourage.

These are very important character traits, and fundamentals of sport and life.

With the Olympics in full swing, we have seen some displays of sportsmanship.

Frenchman Alain Bernard of the men’s 400 meter freestyle relay swim team lipped off, claiming they would “smash the Americans,” providing bulletin board material.

This was not a display of good sportsmanship. This was not taking advantage of an opportunity to respect and encourage.

It was obvious Bernard’s words were a reflection of deep-rooted emotion. They were a swim team on the rise, feeling confident, and they had seen enough of Phelps & Co. in the limelight.

Leading just about the entire race, the French, specifically Bernard, were passed right at the end. Bernard’s pain was obvious, as he hung his head for some time, while American swimmers celebrated all around him.

Being able to witness one of sports’ all-time greatest moments was a thrill for me. However, I was impressed equally when the French, including Bernard, swallowed their pride, and humbly displayed good sportsmanship, seeking out the Americans to shake hands.

Locally, our traditional sport seasons are crossing paths. Youth baseball is segueing into football. It’s unfortunate, but not all end dates and start dates in all communities clearly align. Some baseball playoffs overlap pre-season youth football practices.

An opportunity to respect and encourage exists, and this time it’s for youth coaches and administrators.

Kids playing summer baseball commit to a season in which quite a bit of time is spent on the local diamond. After a lengthy season, is a baseball playoff game more important than a pre-season football practice?

What if the football coach lays down an ultimatum to a player that if he wants to be his starting quarterback, he better not miss another practice?

Now the pressure is on. The child is forced to decide between abandoning his baseball friends at arguably the most important time of the year, for a shot at being a starting quarterback. His first football game might not be for another couple of weeks.

Why do we put kids in such a tough spot?

No wonder our high school multi-sport athletes have gone by way of the dinosaur.

Kids are being forced to pick one sport over another at an early age, and it's causing pain to more than just one decision-making kid.

What about his playoff baseball team he has to consider leaving? What happens when football transitions into basketball or hockey? What would that coach say if the shoe were on the other foot?

Let's recognize opportunities to respect and encourage our young kids by giving them some slack, keeping them out of such pressure-packed situations.

At a young age, such decisions should involve the kind of ice cream they want after a game.