

Yelling isn't Instruction; it's Just Yelling

By Chuck Schumacher

Who likes being yelled at? I'm not fond of it.

Anyone who's ever been to a youth sporting event has witnessed parents and coaches yelling at little kids. When is this OK? – never. Well, OK... if they're standing in front of an oncoming car, you're going to yell at them to save their life. But a coach yelling and screaming at a little seven-year-old as he reaches the dugout - because he hung on to the ball in right field instead of hitting the cutoff man in a precise relay play to home plate? Maybe not.

To be fair, parents and coaches aren't yelling to be mean. They're yelling in hopes



(sometimes even desperation), of helping their kids succeed; it's easy to get caught up in the moment. But the truth is, treating a baseball play like a life-or-death situation never works. What does work is, giving proper instruction at practice to better prepare kids for game time performance.

So why does this irrational behavior continue? The inability of adults to maintain a proper perspective about the difficulty of the game and the young, inexperienced participants is one reason.

An over-emphasis on winning creates a breeding ground for yelling and no one wins.

When adults equate yelling with instruction, kids get confused. And rightfully so because there is no instruction in yelling. Kids intuitively know that something's not right but since they've been taught to respect their elders, they tolerate it for

a time – until they no longer see sports as a fun activity. An additional problem arises when parents are yelling in anger at coaches and officials of the game – it's embarrassing, and many good umpires are calling it quits.

70 percent of kids in the United States stop playing organized sports by age 13.

When adults place emphasis on effort, kids will remain positive, they will have fun, and they will play to the best of their ability. Making instruction a priority over a win-at-all-costs approach will change the dynamic for that seven-year-old in right field. It will make it possible for this young ballplayer to experience the joy of learning instead of the fear of being yelled at, and almost certain failure.

Patience will be absent where immediate gratification exists.

How we respond to a kid striking out, a young pitcher walking one batter after another, or a seven-year-old misplaying balls in the outfield, matters. The fact is, kids haven't mastered any of these things and they need instruction, not yelling. When parents and coaches educate themselves about the basic skills necessary for their team's age group, proper instruction will take place, emotions will stay in check and yelling will be reduced, if not eliminated. The result? Kids will have fun and they will learn.

As parents and coaches, when we take the time to gain an understanding of the basic process of skill development, it is time well spent; we will be investing in the quality of our child's sports experience. Skipping steps in the process only leads to frustration for a young, inexperienced player and a steady diet of frustration is a sure recipe for giving up.

Remember, the skills of all sports are very tough to master. The guidance of a knowledgeable parent or coach is crucial in helping every child reach their full potential - mentally, physically, and emotionally. If you find yourself yelling at little kids during competition or at practices, it probably means you have more to learn about a game that is supposed to be fun. And it begs the question: who is this really for – you, or the kids?

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