



*On behalf of the Amateur Softball Association, welcome to the July issue of the ACE Coach monthly email from ASA Director of Coaching Education and two-time Olympic Coach Mike Candrea: Candrea on Coaching. As a youth sports coach, you naturally want to prepare your team to win as many games as possible, and as a Responsible Coach, you want to prepare your players to win off the field, too. The Liberty Mutual Responsible Sports program is proud to bring you this series in which Coach Candrea will provide you with coaching tips and resources that you can use for the betterment of your youth softball team.*

**July 15, 2009**

**Volume I, Issue 7**

### **Being a Successful Sport Parent**

Sport, as we all know, is a huge part of today's society, and for me, has been a huge part of my entire life. It has been my involvement in athletics that has taught me the principles of teamwork, discipline, persistency, success, failure and basically has defined my character as a person. Involvement in sport can be fun and a powerful learning experience. Coaches and parents must realize that they hold the key and play a major role in this experience and the level of engagement by our youth today.

This month, I would like to focus on the parents' role in our children's involvement in youth sport because we, as coaches, are often times parents of youth athletes too. It really does not matter what the sport, one of the greatest memories as a parent was watching my son and daughter participate in athletics. As a coach and someone that has watched the games of softball and baseball at all levels, some of the most terrifying memories I have had were the way some kids were treated by coaches, and parents alike, that lack the knowledge and understanding of the impact they have on their children's sport experiences. There are two basic choices that we have as coaches and parents:

- To have a positive impact and create a positive environment
- To shorten or end the sport experience by having a negative impact and build an environment built around the fear of failure.

Education through sports can develop children of high character, who lead, persevere, overcome adversity and function as productive team members.

Sports can provide the ideal virtual classroom for teaching life lessons, especially when children have Responsible Sport Parents.

Responsible Sports is proud to offer a number of exclusive interviews with two-time Olympian, Coach Mike Candrea.

We can all agree that life is full of choices and with every choice there comes a consequence. Good choices usually bring good consequences and bad choices always bring bad consequences.

We tell our kids this all the time as we try to teach them responsibility and accountability. Why is it then so hard for coaches and parents to understand that this principle is the foundation for creating an environment in sports? That allows young men and women to enjoy their sport experience while shaping their character and providing endless learning experiences that will help them achieve success in life.

Being a great sport parent is really easy if you can follow some simple guidelines:

1. **Set your priorities.** What should we get out of this experience? Have fun and encourage your child to be a student of the game. Remember that when an athlete has a low skill level and a high challenge, they become frustrated. When the skill level is high and the challenge is low, they get bored. Early development should emphasize skill development in a non-threatening environment. The key is having fun while learning the game. As the skill level increases so should the challenge or you will lose their interest! Want to learn more? Check out [Determining Goals for Our Kids in Sports](#) on ResponsibleSports.com.
2. **Encourage but be realistic.** As a parent our job is to encourage our kids to work hard, be a good teammate and understand that there is a commitment involved in being a part of a team. The most important element is being realistic about your child's abilities and allow them to be who they are and not who you think they should be. They must find the desire to be successful in sport from within. Setting a blueprint for them in life that they do not buy into can set both of you up for failure.
3. **It is not about you.** A common problem in youth sports is the parent living their life through their child. Let your son or daughter enjoy the experience and provide constructive feedback after games and practices that will help them understand the process. The game always looks easier from the stands! Failure is a major part of the game and the ability for you to teach your child how to handle failure and move forward is your greatest challenge! Just remember to always encourage and not discourage! You just saw in last month's newsletter what Jessica Mendoza had to say about "Overcoming Failure." See her perspective on "[Parents Giving Feedback.](#)"
4. **Understand the process.** If you really want to have a great experience and help your child succeed in sport, take the time to understand the process of [learning the necessary skills](#) involved in the sport. It takes 10,000 repetitions to master a skill and very few athletes ever reach that level. Attending clinics together can be a great experience for both the athlete and the parent. This will allow you to reinforce what is being taught and eliminate confusion of mixed messages. The more you understand the process, the more realistic your expectations will be and the more enjoyment your child will find in their sport experience.
5. **If you want to coach - then coach!** If you have the knowledge and skills to teach the game, give your time and enjoy one of the greatest times in your child's life. If you do not want to coach, then let the coach's coach and you support the process. I have seen some outstanding youth programs use their parents to help run drills, provide refreshments and help make the experience great for the athletes. [Jessica's parents even help prepare the field for play.](#) Everyone wins when there is

cooperation and a well thought out plan. Pick your coaches and programs wisely and remember - personal development is more important than winning until the skills can meet the challenge!

6. **You are the role model.** It is not so much how you act but how you react to situations that occur in sport. You have such an impact on your child's experience and more importantly on the development of their character. Sport should be an experience that teaches young people the principles that they will need in the real world. Choose your attitude because that will probably be the attitude that your child develops.
7. **Enjoy your time together.** One of the toughest facts that I must admit to you is that I have spent more time with other people's kids than my own. That is the downfall of coaching as a profession. The greatest time I had as a parent was coaching my son for four years. It was time that I finally realized that I could never get back. Enjoy your time with each other. All I can say is it will be moments that you will never forget or regret! The greatest gift you can give your child besides love is time!
8. **Remember, it's only a game!** There will be much greater challenges in life than playing a game! If I can leave you with one thought, it would be to keep the proper perspective in sport. Win, lose or draw, the experience will never be life threatening! You will never conquer the game you play so have fun and see how much of it you can master! Remember, there will always be life after Sport!

Until next month,



Coach Candrea

ASA Softball is proud to partner with Liberty Mutual Insurance to bring the youth softball community the Responsible Sports™ program, dedicated to championing and celebrating responsibility in youth sports. We believe that some of the most influential individuals in young people's lives are parents and coaches. Visit [ResponsibleSports.com](http://ResponsibleSports.com) to learn more.

