



Champion Coach Note: Virtue in Sport -- Confidence



The Play Like a Champion Today® Philosophy teaches that sports can and should be a virtuous activity. In this week's Coach Note, we explore another virtue that the youth sport experience has the potential to instill: Confidence.

"It is a fine thing to have ability, but the ability to discover ability in others is the true test."

~Lou Holtz

Whether in the boardroom of a Fortune 500 company, a control room for a disaster relief operation, or a 10th grade English class, confidence is one of the most powerful traits a person can have. A person who has the courage of his or her convictions, and the confidence to share those convictions with his or her peers will almost always have the power to captivate and inspire others.

Especially at a young age, sports can play a huge role in the confidence level a child has in all aspects of life. The trust that children feel in their abilities will often determine the trajectory of their lives, and will affect their social relationships as adolescents and adults. If a child is empowered by her coach to make her feel that she has a talent for fielding ground balls, she will more likely feel confident later in life to contribute to a business meeting. Conversely, if a child remembers mostly critical, negative comments on how he swung a golf club, he may be more timid to speak up in a college classroom.

This is not to say that, as coaches, it is our

responsibility to blindly shower children with compliments. In fact, in our world of excessive celebration and trophies, it's important not to instill a sense of over-confidence or entitlement in young people. These traits can be equally detrimental to a person later in life.

As coaches, we have to find a balance of instilling a sense of achievement in our young athletes as well as a sense of humility. The Play Like a Champion Today philosophy teaches the "sandwich approach" that suggests a coach compliment a child on a good performance, then offer a critique of how to improve their play, and finish with a word of confidence in that player's abilities. The two positive statements "sandwich" the critical statement.

And beyond this simple device, it's important to just keep a pulse on the overall "tone" of your coaching. Ask yourself what you will be remembered for as a coach. Will you be the coach whose comments helped discover and develop talent? Or will your athletes remember you as the coach who discouraged them from even trying to get better?