



## Champion Coach Note:

**April is Child Abuse Prevention Month.**

**Preventing abuse of athletes within sports starts with defining and recognizing the types of Abuse.**

Abuse is defined as any act or failure to act that endangers a young person emotionally or physically. Because of the physical nature of sports and the emotions they arouse, coaches must maintain strict vigilance over their own and others' actions (verbal as well as physical). There are four types of abuse that may occur within the sport environment.

- **Physical abuse** includes any kind of hitting, slapping, pushing, or form of punishment (e.g., running "suicides" until players vomit or cramp up) that causes harm. A Notre Dame research study found 4% of child athletes reported their coach kicked or hit a player.
- **Sexual abuse** includes any kind of touching or observing that violates an athlete's privacy. It also includes showing children inappropriate sexual material or making sexual comments.
- **Emotional abuse** includes verbal and physical actions that humiliate or put down a young person, or can harm the psychological well-being of the athlete. Emotional abuse can be quite common in sports. From the Notre Dame study, 11% of children reported that their coach made fun of a member of their team. Historically, coaches may engage in verbal abuse as a form of motivation. Although many athletes may become immune to it, verbal abuse is an unwarranted violation of the person and has no place in



I never yelled at my players much. That would have been artificial stimulation, which doesn't last very long. I think it's like love and passion. Passion won't last as long as love. When you are dependent on passion, you need more and more of it to make it work. It's the same with yelling.  
~John Wooden

Approval is a greater motivator than disapproval, but we have to disapprove on occasion when we correct. It's necessary. I make corrections only after I have proved to the individual that I highly value him. If they know we care for them, our correction won't be seen as judgmental. I also try to never make it personal.  
~John Wooden

A clear display of Coaching Abuse:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wZ3z0HeLq4>

For an appropriate form of coach discipline:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4OPu3fnbmvo>

sports, especially within the Play Like A Champion philosophy of coaching.

- **Neglect** – A failure to respond to athletes' physical and psychological needs. Coaches should be sensitive to possible injuries (especially concussions) as well as illnesses, bullying, and fatigue. A 1995 study by the Minnesota State Amateur Athletic Commission found that 21.5% of the respondents said they had been pressured to play with an injury.

The athletic environment provides an ideal breeding ground for child abuse for at least four reasons. First, sports provide opportunities for coaches to form relationships with athletes and to be alone with them. Second, the coach/player relationship is one in which there is a significant power and status differential. Coaches have traditionally operated as strong, assertive authorities who expect unquestioned obedience. Third, coaches receive an extraordinary amount of child and parent trust, which borders on reverence. Fourth, coaches are often assumed to be moral leaders, who instill the virtues of hard work and loyalty, which are viewed as essential for success in life. As a result, sometimes coaches' tactics, although abusive, are tolerated in the name of discipline.

Abuse by coaches has unfortunately been tolerated at ALL levels of sport (professional, college, high school and youth). Coaches must recognize their own tendencies to abuse athletes and be vigilant of other coaches' tactics that also constitute abuse.

**The time to change a toxic abusive sport culture for all athletes is now.**