



Coach Note: Getting the Best of Bullying

Former Notre Dame football coach Lou Holtz asked each of his players to follow three basic rules: "Do what is right. Do your very best. Treat others like you'd like to be treated" (*Wins, Losses, and Lessons*, 207). The final part of Holtz's philosophy is better known as, "The Golden Rule," and encourages mutual respect and love for one another. Unfortunately, some athletes ignore the components of this approach and instead resort to bullying their teammates and peers. Statistics reveal that almost half of all high school athletes report having been hazed on a sports team. And bullying isn't limited to athletes; coaches, too, can be guilty of bullying their own players.

October is National Bullying Prevention Month. As a coach, use this opportunity to focus on how individuals are treated on your team and how your athletes treat those in your broader school community. If your team truly wants to be a family, you must cultivate an environment of respect, support, and acceptance. Help players to identify that condescending and hurtful comments and actions have no place on a team. Bullying of team members or others not on the team is NOT what you stand for as a team, a school, and as human beings.

Individuals need to understand that their behavior impacts the team as a whole, and certain behaviors – such as teasing, exclusion, or physical bullying – are unacceptable. Make sure that your athletes feel safe speaking up if they witness bullying – it can be challenging to speak up about something like this, but to not



"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

~Matthew 7:12

ATHLETE REFLECTION

Watch [Drew Brees's comments on bullying](#)

Coaches, ask your athletes to reflect on and discuss the following questions:

- How have I treated my teammates today? This week? This season?
- Do I treat my teammates as I would like to be treated?
- Have I seen someone being bullied? Did I make the effort to intervene or notify someone?
- Have I talked negatively about my teammates, coaches, or referees recently?
- What is my unique gift? Should I doubt my self-worth if a bully tells me otherwise?

act (which is often the norm) is NOT the right thing to do.

Finally, be a voice of support and love to your team. Tell your athletes how much you value each and every one of them. And if you do have to confront a bullying issue, take care to act with compassion toward ALL individuals involved. Those who are bullying are also struggling to confront their own issues, and it is essential that you be a resource for them to get help. Try to get at the root of what they are feeling and why they are engaging in hurtful behavior. Set the tone with your team today and get the best of bullying!