



**Why is the role  
of the coach  
important? ▶**

◀ **P**re-adolescent children are barometers of the reaction of adults, says sport psychologist Dr. Glyn Roberts. Because they are unable to assess their own abilities, children rely on what grown-ups say and do to interpret their experiences. By their cheers and looks of approval or disapproval, parents and coaches pass judgment on a child's ability and performance. In the process, they play an important role in shaping children's perception of themselves.

The way in which a coach corrects a skill, reinforces a behaviour, or highlights an error plays an important role in either developing or impairing the self-esteem of young athletes. A study conducted in Québec found that 96 per cent of youngsters say their coach plays an important role in influencing their behaviour, compared to 65 per cent for teachers and 55 per cent for parents. Good coaches recognize the important role they play in influencing behaviour and boosting the confidence and self-esteem of their young charges.

Raising the confidence of young children means building on strengths rather than weaknesses. Good coaching is based on a positive approach and follows these commonsense principles.

**Provide plenty of sincere praise when children are learning and refining new physical skills.** Some researchers suggest giving three or four positive or encouraging statements, then offering some technical instruction, advice, or correction.

**Use a 'sandwich' approach to correcting mistakes.** By providing technical instruction sandwiched between two positive and encouraging statements, parents and coaches will focus on a child's strengths rather than weaknesses.

**Develop realistic expectations that are based on individual abilities.** Don't expect children to perform as miniature adults.

**Reward correct techniques, not just outcomes.** For some children, winning may be an unlikely achievement.

**Reward effort as much as outcome.**

**Teach children how to strive to win by giving maximum effort.<sup>2</sup>**

*“Every Athlete  
Deserves  
a Certified Coach.”*

*Slogan of the  
National Coaching Certification Program*