



**How can parents and
coaches keep sport and
winning in perspective? ▶**

◀ **I**n general, children tend to keep sport in perspective. At the end of a game, many children don't know if they've won or lost. While parents and coaches may dwell on the result of a competition, a child will go home and forget about it. According to a *USA Today/NBC* telephone poll, almost three out of four children aged 10 to 17 years said they wouldn't care if no score was kept during a game.

The tendency to value winning above all else has been recognized as the cause of many problems in children's sport. When winning is kept in perspective, the focus is more accurately placed on *striving* to win and the *pursuit* of victory. Successful coaches recognize that teaching children how to master new skills and strive for excellence even if they risk an error will produce children who can compete against others and feel good about themselves.

Keeping sport in perspective also means balancing a child's sport interest with a variety of other life activities. When children spend 20 hours a week in a pool or gymnasium, they do not have time for music classes, socializing with friends, or attending cultural events. Children should be taught at an early age that being active in sport is one part of a healthy lifestyle allowing for a balance between sport and other interests.

Dr. Geoff Gowan, former president of the Coaching Association of Canada, says keeping sport in perspective also means introducing children to a vast variety of sport experiences. "It's important that they are involved in a little bit of hockey, a little bit of baseball, a little bit of soccer, and a little bit of gymnastics," says Gowan. "This helps to take the pressure off youngsters and teaches them that the essence of sport is simply participation."

Introducing children to different sports will help them to develop running, jumping, throwing, catching, kicking, swinging, and pulling skills — the fundamental skills of human movement. When children build a base of sports skills, they are really building a launching platform for the future, says Gowan.

Parents should also give serious thought to guiding their children towards activities they can play throughout their lives. Sports such as swimming, bicycling, skiing, and soccer can be enjoyed by people of all ages. Some of the highly strenuous collision sports can be enjoyed by lots of participants, but may not lend themselves to a lifetime of injury-free play.

Reference Notes

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