

Winning vs. Winners Understanding the Difference between Winning and Being A Winner

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My Two Cents.....

Why do we play sports? Why do we compete? Is it about how much money you can make? Is it about being called #1? Is it about winning?

Everybody wants to be a winner. Everybody wants to be number one. Our society has put great emphasis on champions and winning over the years. Winning is instantly associated with being successful and in many times it is accurate. But does that mean those who do not win are not successful? Competition is good. Results are important.

I'm not minimize the winning....it is important and the GOAL of athletics in competition. But we sometimes lose sight of the lessons taught that having a positive impact and making a difference is the true measure of success in youth sports. If you can find that special combination of winning and being a winner you can have a tremendous impact on young people that will go a longer way than winning a championship when you are 10.

It is different in professional athletics. Winning is vital to keep their job or to re-negotiate a new contract. The media and television play a big role in painting a very strong picture in our minds when a team or individual wins a championship. The celebrations, the parades, the money, the rings and the trophy. All the spoils for the winner. And why not? After all, they have worked hard and deserved what they have received. Our kids see this and set their goals high and strive to someday achieve the same. We all need heroes.

In youth sports, winning is nice, but it is not vital to survival. We all see players rushing to play on the best teams to hopefully win a championship while losing site of the overall process of development. Youth sports offer all of us an incredible opportunity and avenue to teach our young athletes the benefits of both the game and the overall learning process of development. Because you win doesn't necessarily make you good and likewise, because you lose doesn't necessarily make you bad. There will always be different levels of talent and competition. And the outcome may change on a regular basis. ***We play and train to learn, to develop, to become better.***

The less than 1% of athletes that make it to the highest level are held to a higher standard. The rest of the 99% who merely participate in youth sports for a short period and have no intention nor the talent of making it a career path, can learn so much from youth sports participation. And not just from winning. Everybody can be a good winner; it is in losing where your true character is revealed. The adult, leader, role model, the coach needs to help guide these athletes in the proper direction. And that is overall DEVELOPMENT. In training, in games, in winning and in losing, physically, mentally, emotionally and technically.

"Winning can define character, but how you handle losing reveals it."

If we understand how to win and lose and the importance of learning from both, young athletes will be much better off when dealing with other real life situations not related to the game itself such as school, friends, building relationships, dealing with setbacks, etc.

Here is a short but important list of 12 simple ingredients that help define a winner:

Winners.....

- Lead by example and have a positive impact on those they reach
- Are strong role models who surround themselves with good people
- Learn from successes
- Learn from mistakes
- Have a positive infectious attitude
- Respect peers and the game in which they are participating

- Learn from both winning and losing
- Have a vision for the future for those involved
- Are consistent in their behavior over a long period of time
- Do the right thing for the right reasons
- Are "Team" oriented people
- Play by the rules

Soccer is a team game. Many mistakes happen in a single game by everybody involved (players, coaches and referees). The game result is a shared effort and a unity of learning. Learning takes place all over the field that can result in victory or defeat.

The search for the PERFECT GAME or PLAYER is on. Good luck. In the meantime, play hard, be competitive, strive for success, try to be the best player, team or coach, work hard, set your goals high, dream of someday.....but don't lose sight of all the learning going on and how it can shape the character of a "true winner". Youth sports helps shape peoples lives in many ways. I believe that if you focus on the people you are influencing and impacting, and all of the responsibilities that go with teaching our youth, you can make a tremendous difference in their lives by following the proper path. And if you do it the right way, the winning feels that much better. Win or lose....Play to learn!