

What is a **good** soccer coach?

A parent's perspective



Introduction

It's a subject that we think we know a lot about - how to coach youth soccer. But what do parents look for in their child's team coach? Is it perseverance, the ability to keep order and a sense of humor?

The article below (reproduced with the permission of the coachingcorner.com) was written by an American 'soccer mom' who knows why she has kept with the same soccer coach for the last four years.

GOOD COACHING

By Lori Reynolds

"What is a good coach?"

"Why is HE a good coach?"

"What makes him different from other coaches?"

I've been asked these questions—or ones similar—many times over my years of being a soccer mom. My son has had the same coach for almost four years, and no matter what organization the team plays with, I make sure we stay with the same coach. Why? That's easy. He possesses qualities that I feel are essential and necessary for being a positive influence and good coach, such as:

PATIENCE—This is probably the most important characteristic. Let's face it—12 active players together require a lot of attention. A good coach is one who doesn't expect angels on the soccer field.

TOLERANCE—This quality goes hand-in-hand with patience. Kids are going to be rowdy, or moody or lazy. Tolerance takes the different mind-sets and turns the focus to the tasks "afoot".

ACCEPTANCE—Our children are so very different. Each one has varied potential and skill levels. A good coach is one who recognizes each child as an individual and encourages that child to perform at their very best level. Perfection is not required!

MOTIVATION—Soccer can be viewed as kids kicking a ball across the field, or it can be viewed as an opportunity for growth. The true test lies in sparking a child's interest to learn and grow and keeping that spark alive each season.

RESPECT—I've seen many games in which the coaches, and sometimes parents, of the other teams berate and belittle their children for making "mistakes". Sometimes they even go as far as criticizing opposing team members. Good grief! We're playing U-10 soccer! This isn't the World Cup. A good Coach never singles out a child for making a mistake and does not allow parents or the other team members to do so either. At the beginning of every season 'Coach' should remind us parents that we're all in this sport to learn and have a good time.

SPORTSMANSHIP—Perhaps this should have been on top of the list, but being toward the end does not lessen the importance. My definition of sportsmanship is to teach kids to work together as a team in order to achieve a common goal. It also means teaching kids to respect other players as well as each other. Insults are not tolerated. Mistakes are team mistakes, and they are used as teaching tools for the next game.

ABILITY TO TEACH—Sounds simple, right? It's not. How many times has a parent signed up a child for a sport, only to have a well-intentioned father decide to coach? He may or may not know the sport. He may or may not relate well to his players. There is a huge difference between the team whose members do what is yelled at them, and the team whose members actually understand what to do and why. A good coach teaches his players basic fundamentals, explain concepts and enables players to think logically when making a play. One of your practice mantras should be "You've got a player X and a player Y, the ball comes to you, what do you do"? The kids are able to use logic and make the best choices based on situations.

LOVE OF KIDS: They have the energy to make every practice and every game a new experience for coaches and parents alike. Without their vision and energy, sports would be dull and unappreciated. They offer a day-to-day challenge for coaches, which is contagious and which is motivation for everyone involved in athletics at all levels.

LOVE OF THE GAME: Coaches must love their sport, and, more importantly, must show their players enthusiasm for every aspect of the game. This would include techniques and tactics. The love of the game must also show to the players the love for fair-play, respect for the opponents, officials, and spectators, and positive reinforcement for team mates. Only a good coach who loves the game can provide the correct aspects involved in the winning and losing of competition.

One of the reasons we parents encourage our kids to play sports is to hopefully broaden their horizons and to give them additional skills they wouldn't get otherwise. While having a winning season is great, I consider it a bonus and not the main purpose.

Playing sports should be a positive experience, and it should be one that children look forward to each and every season.