

Hey Adults, Not Everyone Can Win.

In this current day and age, everyone gets a trophy. Just signing up for a team or showing up to a game wins anyone a special reward. No matter if a child is dedicated or not, they automatically win the game. But should they? Over half of Americans want to get rid of this mindset in youth sports, and yet more and more children and teens are getting exposed to it every day. This mentality damages a kid's desire to give the game all they've got, and they feel entitled to a reward even if they didn't try! Many teens receive a contradictory message from parents about the meaning and importance of winning and its relationship to effort. So why do coaches and parents keep using this mindset in sports? Some believe that giving everyone a trophy encourages kids to keep trying even if they fail. This, however, is entirely incorrect. This mentality takes the point of trophies and throws it in the trash. The "everyone wins" mentality is having a more detrimental effect on this generation than a positive one.

The "everyone wins" mentality is damaging this generation because it makes kids and teens feel entitled to win just for showing up to a few games. There have been many studies about the benefits and downfalls of this mindset, including one by Scholastic News. Scholastic mentions that "If kids get trophies just for participating, they won't learn that sometimes they have to do more than just show up to succeed in life" ("Scholastic News Edition"). The News stated that if adults and coaches award children who just signed up for the team and put in little effort, then the kids will not grow to realize that they need to strive for first place and put in all of the effort they have, just to stay in the game. Because of this mindset, many kids

believe that they deserve a trophy, medal, or special recognition for giving minimal effort towards winning and trying their best. When children and teens fall victim to mindset, they might be benefiting from a little pick-me-up at the end of the game, but in the long run, it will come back to bite them. When kids grow up and face the reality of adulthood, including college, work, and even sports, they will be unprepared for the harsh wakeup call of putting real effort into things in order to succeed.

Conversely, some believe that giving all kids a trophy does benefit them. For example, Tom Ferry, director of the Sports and Society Program at the Aspen Institute, believes that participation trophies encourage commitment and dedication in young kids. He believes that these trophies kindle a love of sports. It is his opinion that "From ages 0 to 12, the goal is to help kids to fall in love with sports, to want to come back the next year, to want to go into the backyard and improve their technique"(Heffernan). However, when children are given a reward every single season of every sport they play, the trophies lose their value.

As Betty Berdan, a high schooler from Connecticut, said, "Like many other kids my age, I grew up receiving trophy after trophy, medal after medal, ribbon after ribbon for every sports season, science fair and spelling bee I participated in. Today the dozens of trophies, ribbons, and medals sit in a corner of my room, collecting dust. They do not mean much to me because I know that identical awards sit in other children's rooms all over town and probably in millions of other homes across the country"(Heffernan).

Berdan's statement proves that even the teens of the "trophies for all" generation oppose this mindset. She means that even though adults believe that they are protecting kids, they are actually making the future more difficult and removing the importance that a trophy has to a winner. Many teen's sports teams use

this mindset to help “encourage” players, but they don't realize that even the kids on the team oppose their mentality.

Moreover, the “everyone wins” mindset is having a negative effect on this generation because adults are sending a contradictory message to kids about performance and effort. Adults try to convince kids to try their best through common cliches and expressions, although these may contradict the way they actually praise children and teens. As Roxanne Jones from CNN stated, “We often say, ‘It doesn't matter if you win or lose, it's how you play the game.’ If we truly believe that, why don't we give a trophy only to the player who was the best athlete overall?”

(Jones). Parents are often key role models in a child's life. Kids look up to them for everything, and when they tell kids that the way they play is all that matters their children feel encouraged. However, they are also giving big participation trophies to players who might not have even wanted to come and play, or who didn't put any effort in at all. This sends mixed messages about the meaning of success to young kids, and it impacts the way they live their lives in the future. Many teenagers and kids have been raised this way, told that it doesn't matter if they win or lose as long as they try. This on its own is a good message, but when adults are telling their kids this one minute, and giving the losing team trophies the next minute, the inspiration disappears. More and more young people are being exposed to this attitude every day, and it is damaging this generation in many ways. Kids now believe that winning is irrelevant and that trophies are for everybody, whether they win or lose.

Furthermore, the “everyone wins” mentality is having a harmful effect on this generation because it takes away the feeling of success a winner has when

they get a genuine trophy. Many teens and kids have won a game and done better than everyone else, just to receive the same reward as the ones who didn't participate fully. This leads them to believe that effort doesn't matter and that they will win no matter what. In Scholastic News, one interviewee argued that "it doesn't feel right if you don't earn it. The best part of getting an award is knowing that you accomplished something. When every kid gets a trophy, it takes away from the real achievements of others"(Scholastic News Edition). There are many winning children with a joy and passion for sports who try their best to win every day. They feel a sense of disappointment and dissatisfaction when they "win" the same trophy as the kid who sat on the bench the whole game. They may realize that their coaches will not reward them for being a winner and trying hard, and therefore will lose any desire to win and try their hardest. The kids will never see sport the same way again. Teens feel the constant urge to win and do better than all others, but when the winner gets the same plastic trophy as the people that they beat, one will feel as if the effort put into winning went to nothing. They will realize that it didn't matter to the coaches who actually tried and who didn't.

Therefore, the "everyone gets a trophy" mentality has an awful effect on this current generation. Kids are raised to feel entitled to winning when they get a trophy for only showing up. Many children are receiving mixed signals about winning and effort. They are also losing the drive to try their hardest and succeed. It is Roxxane Jones' view that "We should teach kids to work for their rewards in life because showing up is not enough to earn praise... the biggest lesson sports teaches us is how to face defeat and still return another day to try and improve your game until one day you can put yourself and your

team in a position to win. You learn that losing hurts -- even in T-ball - but it is an essential part of living a meaningful life" (Jones). This is a statement to live by. So adults out there - stop trying to shield children from failure; it is a guaranteed factor in life and will be encountered at one point or the other. Instead, teach them that failure is tough, painful, and inevitable, but can be overcome and even learned from. Children and teens deserve to be prepared for failure in the future.

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