Your Role as a Little League Parent

Local Little Leagues are entirely volunteer organizations. Each league depends on adults like you to organize and conduct every aspect. Not only do adults serve as administrators, volunteer coaches, and umpires they also help with field maintenance, fund-raising, concessions, and numerous other special projects.

Your willingness to exchange time and effort for your child's benefit and enjoyment is very important to the functioning of your local Little League. Cheering your daughter or son on from the stands is one important way to be involved, but we invite you to do even more by volunteering to help run your local Little League program.

Without a doubt, Little League is a family affair that gives parents and children a common ground for spending time together. Whether you are coaching the players, selling popcorn to the fans, or bringing soda for the team after the game, your family will enjoy being a part of Little League in your community. Most of all, your will appreciate the benefits of your enthusiasm and involvement in his or her activities.

When winning is kept in perspective, there is room for fun in the pursuit of victory or more accurately, the pursuit of victory is fun. With your leadership Little League can help your child learn to accept responsibilities, accept others and most of all, accept her - or himself.

Keeping Winning in Perspective

Are you able to keep winning in perspective? You might answer with a confident yes, but will you be able to do so when it is your child who is winning or losing, when your child is treated a bit roughly by someone on the other team, or when the umpire makes a judgment against your child? Parents are sometimes unprepared for the powerful emotions they experience when watching their sons and daughters compete.

One reason that parents' emotions run to high is that they want their children to do well; it reflects on them. They also may believe that their children's failures are their own. Parents need to realize that dreams of glory they have for their youngsters are not completely unselfish, but they are completely human. Parents who are aware of their own pride, who are even capable of being amused by their imperfections, can keep themselves well under control.

Being a Model of Good Sportsmanship

Flying off the handle at games or straining relations with the coach or other parents creates a difficult situation for your child. Just as you don't want your daughter or son to embarrass you, don't embarrass your Little Leaguer.

It's no secret that kids imitate their parents. In addition, they absorb the attitudes they think lie behind their parents' actions. As you go through the Little League season with your child, be a positive role model. How can you expect your child to develop a healthy perspective about competing and winning if you display an unhealthy one? Remember Little league is supposed to be a fun experience for your child, and one in which he or she will learn some sport skills. Winning will take care of itself.

Some parents seem to abandon good principles of child rearing when their child is participating in sports. However, just as your child's home, school, and religious environment affect the type of person he or she will be, so does the sport environment especially when your child is young. Remember this:

> If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.
> If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.
> If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.
> If children live with praise, they learn to like themselves.
> If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.
> If children live with recognition, they have to have a goal.
> If children live with honesty, they learn what trust is.

Note: From "Great Projects Report," Baltimore Bulletin of Education, 1965-1966, 42 (3).

Parents' Checklist for Success

Here is a list of questions you should consider when your child begins playing Little league. If you can honestly answer yes to each one, you will find little trouble ahead.

- *Can you share your son or daughter?*

  This means trusting the coach to guide your child's Little League experiences. It means accepting the coach's authority and the fact that he or she may gain some of your child's admiration that once was directed toward you.

- *Can you admit your shortcomings?*

  Sometimes we slip up as parents, our emotions causing us to speak before we think. We judge our child too hastily, perhaps only to learn later the child's actions were justified. It takes character for parents to admit they made a mistake and to discuss it with their child.

- *Can you accept your child's disappointments?*

  Sometimes being a parent means being a target for a child's anger and frustration. Accepting your child's disappointment also means watching your play poorly

during a game when all of his or her friends succeed, or not being embarrassed into anger when your 10-year-old breaks into tears after a failure. Keeping your frustration in check will help you guide your son or daughter through disappointments.

- *Can you accept your child's triumphs?*

  This sound much easier than it often is. Some parents, not realizing it, may become competitive with their daughter or son, especially if the youngster receives considerable recognition. When a child plays well in a game, parents may dwell on minor mistakes, describe how an older brother or sister did even better, or boast about how they played better many years ago.

- *Can you give your child some time?*

  Some parents are very busy, even though they are interested in their child's participation and want to encourage it. Probably the best solution is never to promise more than you can deliver. Ask about your child's Little league experiences, and make every effort to watch at least some games during the season.

- *Can you let your child make her or his own decisions?*

  Decisions making is an essential part of young person's development, and it is a real challenge to parents. It means offering suggestions and guidance but finally, within reasonable limits, letting the child go his or her own way. All parents have ambitions for their children, but parents must accept the fact that they cannot mold their children's lives. Little League offers parents a minor initiation into the major process of letting go.

Throughout the guide Dr. Martens discusses your responsibilities as a Little League parent. Here we summarize the major responsibilities for you to review.

Parents Responsibilities

1. Let your child choose to play Little League and to quit if he or she dose not enjoy baseball. Encourage participation, but don't pressure.

2. Understand what your child wants from participating in Little League and provide a supportive atmosphere for achieving these goals.

3. Set limits on your child's participation in baseball. You need to determine when she or he is physically and emotionally ready to play and to insure that the conditions for playing are safe.

4. Make certain your child's coach is qualified to guide your child through the Little League experience.

5. Keep winning in perspective by remembering Athletes First, Winning Second. Instill this perspective in your child.

6. Help your child set realistic goals about his or her own performance so success is guaranteed.

7. Help your child understand the experiences associated with competitive sports so she or he can learn the valuable lessons sports can teach.

8. Discipline your when he or she misbehaves, breaks the rules, or is uncooperative or uncontrollable.

9. Turn your child over to the coach at practices and games, and avoid meddling or becoming a nuisance.