

# A YMCA YOUTH SUPER SPORTS PARENT'S CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Remain in the spectator area during competitions.
2. Let coaches coach.
3. Keep comments positive to players, parents, officials, and coaches of either team.
4. Come to games sober, and refrain from drinking alcohol at contests.
5. Cheer for your team.
6. Show interest, enthusiasm, and support for your child.
7. Be in control of your emotions.
8. Help when you're asked to by a coach or an official.
9. Thank the coaches, officials, and other volunteers who conducted the event.

## Helping Your Child Enjoy Sports

You can help your child enjoy sports by doing the following:

- Developing a winning perspective
- Building your child's self-esteem
- Emphasizing fun, skill development, and striving to win
- Helping your child set performance goals

## Developing a Winning Perspective

Every decision parents make in guiding their children should be based first on what's best for the child and second on what may help the child win. Stated another way, this perspective places **Athletes First, Winning Second**. We're not saying winning is unimportant. Winning—or striving to win—is essential to enjoyable competition. Pursuing victory and achieving goals are sweet rewards of sport participation. But they can turn sour

if, through losing, you or your child lose the proper perspective also. An obsession with winning often produces a fear of failure, resulting in below average performances and upset children.

## **Building Your Child's Self-Esteem**

Building self-esteem in your child is one of your most important parenting duties. It's not easy—and it's made even more difficult in sport by the prevailing attitude of "winning is everything." Athletes who find their self-worth through winning will go through tough times when they lose. Building self-esteem in your child takes more than encouragement. You need to show your child unconditional approval and love. Don't praise dishonestly; children can see through that. If your child strikes out three times and makes an error in a softball game, don't tell her she played well. Just show the same amount of love and approval for her—not for her performance—that you showed before the game.

## **Emphasizing Fun, Skill Development, and Striving to Win**

The reason you should emphasize fun is quite simple: without it, your child may not want to keep playing. Kids don't have fun when they stand around in practice or sit on the bench during games, when they feel pressure to win and don't improve or learn new skills. Conversely, they *do* have fun when practices are well organized, they get to play in games, they develop new skills, and the focus is on *striving* to win.

## **Helping Your Child Set Performance Goals**

Performance goals—which emphasize individual skill improvement—are much better than the outcome goal of winning for two reasons:

1. Performance goals are in the athlete's control.
2. Performance goals help the athlete improve.

Performance goals should be specific, and they should be challenging but not too difficult to achieve. For example, if your child plays soccer, you might help him set the goals of making short, crisp passes; of staying between the ball and the goal on defense; and of giving his best effort throughout the game.

You (and your child's coach) should help your young athlete set such goals. And help your child focus on performance goals before a game; this focus will help sport be an enjoyable learning experience for your son or daughter.