

# WHAT KIDS NEED FROM SPORTS

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I grew up playing a ton of sports. I found triathlon at the age of ten, but it did not keep me from playing football, baseball, tennis, pole vaulting, and wrestling. I loved being active and competing. I thrived on improvement and being better than I was the day before.

The sports I played and the coaches I interacted with shaped the way I coach today: either by making me want to emulate or showing me how I should be different. Let's be honest - there are a lot of problems in today's sports culture. Fun is being sucked out of sports due to high pressure from parents and coaches, lack of a supportive culture within teams, and unfortunately scandals. Due to this, parents tend to inspect programs much more thoroughly these days, as they should, to ensure it will be a positive environment for their child.

So, what do kids need from sports? First, kids need to be surrounded by amazing role models. I believe that the number one goal of any sport should be to develop character - both on and off the field. Coaches who are positive role models do this instinctively and lives are changed. If my children do not become professional athletes, so be it, but I am going to fight tooth and nail to make sure they have strong characters. Sports are simply a vehicle to develop character at the core.

Second, kids need to be surrounded by expertise, shown in both the coach's knowledge and program design. Without expertise, programs are watered down versions that do a disservice to the child. Expert programs develop skills that will be used for a lifetime, not only in the chosen sport but also in other sports and physical endeavors. Expert programs make athletes better which is crucial to the third thing kids need.

Third, kids need development that breeds self-confidence and fun. The only way to get this crucial result is to mix amazing role models with expertise. These two crucial elements produce a program that develops the individual in a way that makes sports rewarding and fun. A program built on expertise delivered through positive role models will create success despite athletic talent and give athletes a self confidence that they will rely on for the rest of their lives. This self confidence will shape who they are and who they will become.

I am proud that we have built not only our youth program but also our adult program on these principles. I am proud that our athletes are better people due to their contact with our coaches and programs.