

what does it really matter? Not allowing them to play or deducting points does seem extreme if we are really serious about participation and enjoyment!

Beating opponents and winning prizes were the lowest ranked areas of importance for children. Winning and its importance shouldn't be neglected, it is part of everyday life. What is important is that we expose children to both the objective outcomes of winning and losing, and subjective outcomes of success and failure, and educate them in the acceptable behaviour required when these occur. Learning how to handle success and failure are fundamental life skills, and sport can provide an excellent vehicle in establishing people of character. As a coach, very few of us will coach a champion basketballer, but we can all develop champion people. A good movie to watch is "Mr Holland's Opus" about the music teacher who instills qualities and virtues in his students that prepare them for life, not just music. This ideal is worth aspiring to though coaching basketball.

As for trophies, be mindful when awarding them. Perhaps acknowledge everybody equally for participation. If you are going to single out recipients, perhaps award trophies for "Most Improved", "Best Defender", "Best Effort" or even "Best Team Person Player". Acknowledge all things that are important, not just the best player, because that person may not always be accompanied by the best attitude, which is what we should be trying to promote.

Finally, work hard to improve your skills. Attend coaching course, ask questions of other coaches and players, watch videos, read books. It is important that you are aware that the progress if your players can only be helped by your progress as a coach. Coach to facilitate learning and most importantly – FUN!

For more information checkout [www.coachingaus.org](http://www.coachingaus.org)



## BUILDING BETTER BASKETBALL



*ISSUE No. 1*

## *COACHING*

### **HOW TO ENJOY COACHING KIDS?**

*Good coaching produces happy kids  
Happy kids tell their friends  
Happy kids play longer  
Happy kids are our best advertising*



Welcome to our 10 part series on coaching juniors. The focus of this series is on coaching beginners and social players. If a child has a desire to progress beyond that level they will no doubt be able to join higher level programs. Although this series is for those involved in coaching at the grass-roots level, it also has relevance to all levels of junior coaching.

Before you begin, make sure that you are coaching for the right reasons. Remember that you are there for them, they are not there for you. Coaching is an interactive experience, not a vehicle for self-promotion, if your motivations are clashing with those of the players, it is unlikely that you or the players will enjoy the season.

Therefore it is imperative that when coaching children and adolescents, that we understand what motivates them, NOT what motivates you! This will help you interact better with the players, therefore practice will be more productive and your team better prepared for competition. To do this you need a good understanding of the individual players; their family life, interests, personality, other sports they play and their fitness and skill levels. Watching, listening and talking are key coaching skills that will help you understand your players better.

Results from a survey (Coaching Children, 1989) show that children rank the following in order of importance to them:

1. Improving their skill level.
2. Playing, using the skills of the sport.
3. Having a good relationship with the coach.
4. Being selected in the team, not on the bench.
5. Competing and trying to win.
6. Having an exciting, close game.
7. Being with friends.
8. Wearing the correct uniform
9. Beating their opponents
10. Receiving medals or trophies.

Obviously different children have their own motivations, maybe you could survey your own team? Appreciate, that for the players, it's not all about winning, and that we should tailor our coaching to suit the motivations of each particular group, so they enjoy their basketball experience – and you do too!

Using these results, we can move forward, with a greater awareness, into coaching. Children want to be taught new skills, but be aware that there are various stages from first learning a skill to mastering it. Coaches should; give a good demonstration, make the skills flow from simple to complex, not give too much information at any stage, remember children can only concentrate for short periods and their learning can be affected by physical and mental fatigue. Make sure you learn the correct techniques yourself and pass them on to the players with those things in mind.

Children wish to have a good relationship with the coach, learn their names as soon as possible and use their names when providing feedback. Talk to them, ask them questions about things other than basketball. Acknowledge them when they do well, laugh and joke with them (NOT at them). Treat them as individuals, treat them equally and fairly regardless of ability. Provide them all with the opportunity to improve, whether it be at practice or in games. Rotate the starting five, and the five that finish games. Pay as much attention when teaching to your lesser lights, as you would your stars. Encourage all players to compete to the best of their ability, not solely to win. Winning and losing are objective outcomes, but success is subjective. Losing a game in which your team has played well does not mean the team failed – and they need to learn that!

Most children begin after prompting by friend and continue playing with those friends or friends they make. When as a coach you structure practice, include activities that will allow children to work with their friends, and also to develop new friends. A uniform can help promote a sense of belonging and should be encouraged, but rules governing such issues should be inclusive. Children obviously don't rate this as important issue, so maybe we shouldn't either? If a player has a different colour pair of shorts on for a local competition match, then