

# GABRIELE

## FITNESS & PERFORMANCE



## The Purpose of Youth Sports

Vince Gabriele

Before youth sports leagues were created kids would just go out and play. Their parents were not watching them on the edge of their seats, there were no umpires, no world series and no coaches that had a win at all cost attitude.

I came across this quote and feel it sums everything up perfectly:

"As a coach of youth athletes you are first and foremost an educator whose primary mission is to help each of your athletes become all that he or she can become not only in sport but in life."

The following is a great mission statement from a Youth Sports organization. I have never had any experience with this company but if they live this mission statement, they are on the right path.

*Youth Basketball of America, the premier youth membership organization in the sport of basketball, strives to provide opportunities for personal growth and development of youth athletes while also reinforcing positive influences, self-confidence, self-esteem and the ability to excel on and off the court. Through participation, YBOA is dedicated to educate and motivate each member while encouraging teamwork, sportsmanship and fun through the spirit of basketball.*

The following are some great goals of youth sports

### **Character Development**

You are molded as a person through your failures and your successes. Youth sports are a great way to develop character.

It is usually the people that never experience any failure that have a tough time dealing with it later in life. It is important not be afraid to put your child in a situation where they may fail, it might be one of the best things they ever do.

When I was in 6th grade I was the worst football player on my team. I got in only 8 plays a game (the required minimum) and wanted to quit because I was getting picked on because I was so bad.

My parents made me stick it out and I eventually earned a Division 1A football scholarship. If I had quit when it got hard I am sure my life would be much different now.

## **Teamwork**

In any situation in life we all are required to work with other people. Youth sports are a fantastic builder to teach young kids how to work well with others. If the focus is put on winning the game usually the best players get most of the attention putting the pressure on them to win the game. This leaves many others neglected and does not teach ALL players on the team to work together for the sake of the team.

## **Developing General Physical Preparation**

Too much time is spent on developing specific sport skills and we are putting our tie on before our shirt in this situation. Teaching sport specific skills without a basic foundation of motor skill development, coordination and relative strength is a huge cause of injury and reinforces bad technique.

All sports should have an emphasis on the general physical conditioning aspect. This does not mean to run the kids until they puke or to have them to hundreds of sit-ups and crappy push-ups, this is uneducated training that is usually described as mental toughness training. This needs to be eliminated immediately because it is causing injuries and is driving kids away from sports.

Youth Coaches need to be educated on how they can use their practice time to teach kids proper general conditioning strategies that will improve performance and prevent injuries, not create them.

Almost all of the kids that play youth sports will not go into the professional ranks. However all of them will need to stay in shape for the rest of their lives.

This is the purpose of youth sports; develop kids to become more functional adults.

## **Impact a life**

It is not a secret that in most situations the most talented athletes get the most coaching and attention and the less talented ones get the least. People come to me and say we have to get little Johnny to your facility, he is the fastest kid on the field.

What about the other kid who cannot even get out of his own way. Doesn't he need to do some athletic development training so maybe one day he can get on the field and be competitive? Doesn't this kid deserve more coaching? More time needs to be spent with the least talented kids. These are the ones that usually lack confidence and need extra coaching but in most cases they get the least.

In our facility we have several kids that come through our door that may never be great athletes. We do however make sure that these kids get the opportunity to reach their full potential.

When they do, the results are much more than more playing time or scoring more goals, these results last forever.

These results are the feeling of success, accomplishment and confidence.

This is what youth sports is all about.

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