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Coaches need to appreciate every player

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Guest Columnist

I have listened to many talk shows and read articles on children who play sports and how we should only reward the players that try their hardest, give their all and display good sportsmanship.

Unfortunately there are many coaches that fail to see the quiet kids, the ones who are willing to go the extra mile if you ask, the ones who stay after and help load up the equipment and pick up the mess the other players left behind.

I remember when my son was playing soccer many years ago, the assistant coach's boy and my son hardly ever played. Even though they both worked hard and went the extra mile at practice, the coach never gave them an opportunity to play.

As a parent you want to speak up and ask the coach: "Why aren't you picking my kid to play? He's a good boy and tries really hard!" But that isn't how it works. When it comes to sports, the coach is the captain of the ship. They are the ones that have to make the tough decisions for the team.

I have talked to many of my friends who have been coaches and they all said that the goal is to win, and we will do whatever it takes to win the game. They also added that we try to play everyone, but unfortunately, sometimes kids get left on the bench.

I understand that the goal is to win and that not every kid can be a winner. There are some kids that are gifted and others that are not. But I think we are forgetting that these kids are not professionals but rather kids that join the teams to learn the game and better their abilities. They can't better themselves and help the team sitting on a bench.

I wish there were more coaches like my friend, Mike, who was willing to take the chance on the quiet kid – the one who would do his best and never complain. Here is Mike's story of giving the quiet, reserved player a chance to better himself, build his confidence and to truly be part of the winning team.

The 'quiet and reserved' player

I remember one of my soccer kids who was very quiet and not very confident. He was always very timid during practices but would give his best, and never complained. He was always respectful and did whatever I asked of him.



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One day we were playing a big game, which we needed to win, and we were actually leading by a couple of goals. We had a corner kick to make and I decided to take out one of our best players and substituted him with my quiet and reserved player. Not only was my key player stunned, so was the rest of the team, especially when we had a chance to win and here I was sending in a non-aggressive player to make the play. At first the quiet player was reluctant to go in; he didn't want our team to lose because of him. I just encouraged him to go in and do his best and nothing more. To our amazement the quite little boy scored many goals, and thanks to him and his willingness to go the extra mile, we ended up winning the game. He was so proud; his confidence level rose to a higher level and his self-esteem improved. As the season went on, he was more outspoken and aggressive and not afraid to play soccer to its fullest and enjoy it.

If we want to help the quiet kids from being bullied or isolated from other kids we have to not only give them a push but also appreciate what they do to help the team.

Coaches remember, these kids will never forget you and your leadership. Especially if you are willing to take the chance on the quiet kid, you may find like my friend, Mike, did, that it may or may not pay off on the field, but in the long run depending on how you handle things you will inspire that child to raise their confidence and improve self-worth and self-esteem.

Mike Rother contributed to this article.

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