



Tools & Resources for Character Development on your Teams
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Why is Character Development Important on School Sports Teams?

- As coaches and educators we want to focus on educating our athletes as well as training them so that they can reach their fullest potential.
- Team culture is far more impactful than just learning the X's and O's.
- Coaches, parents and athletes may think that winning and future scholarships matter, but according to scholarships.com, only about 7% of youth athletes go on to play higher level sports.
- With such statistics in mind it is recommended that all coaches should teach character development and that parents should encourage the same.



Building Positive Character in Athletes Does Not Happen by Accident

- Participating in sports does not automatically mean that athletes will develop and build character.
- Studies on sports participation show that sports can have both a positive and a negative influence on character development.
- Character can be taught and learned in a sports setting, and participating in sports can lead to an experience that builds character, **but** only if the environment is structured and a goal is set to develop character.
- Building positive character requires intentional work on behalf of the athlete, coach and athletic organization.



A popular tweet what was recently circulating stated:

“High school sports teach respect ... for the rules ... for opponents and officials ... for the feelings, rights and traditions of others. Our world is a more empathetic place, thanks to high school sports.”

That would be wonderful if this was always true! But, is it?

If this was true, why do we continue to see so many examples of unsportsmanlike behavior and disrespect in sporting environments?



Break-Out Session #1

Questions to discuss:

1. How could participation in sports lead to negative influences on character development?
2. What negative characteristics could a coach pass on to an athlete?
3. How can an environment be structured to develop positive character?



Break-Out Session #1 -Follow-up Thoughts

Questions to discuss:

1. How could participation in sports lead to negative influences on character development? -determination to win at all costs, cheating, bending rules, disrespect of opponents, attitude of being better than others, being too competitive in everything and not a team player, judging others instead of lifting them up, anxiety/stress and fear of making a mistake in front of others, violent/rude/aggressive behaviour habits, use of illegal drugs as a means of winning, blame others/not taking responsibility, unwilling to choose the positive, moral behavior at all times in a high stakes situation
2. What negative characteristics could a coach pass on to an athlete?
-favoritism, criticism of athletes (publicly in front of others/humiliate), opponents, questions the officials (disrespect), points out weakness of opponents to be used against them, will do anything to win, tells players to not tell parents, inappropriate language, negative moral behaviour in front of players on the team.
3. How can an environment be structured to develop positive character?
-See strategies on the next slide



Before coaches start a character building program with their athletes, it is important for coaches to use the following strategies:

1. Be a good model- a coach should show their sportsmanship and respect to opponents, team members, and the officials. Athletes will follow a coach's step to have a positive character.
2. Emphasize sportsmanship from the beginning.
3. Talk about - combining of seriousness and playfulness.
4. Regularly use the language of sportsmanship.
5. Expect sportsmanship in practice and games.
6. Reinforce good sportsmanship.
7. Reinforce continually that participating in interscholastic sports is and should be fun.
8. Emphasize that the purpose of the interscholastic sports is to teach sports skills and life lessons.
9. Help each athlete develop and achieve his or her all-around potential.
10. Follow the rules explicitly and reinforce fair play and sportsmanship at all times.
11. Teach how to learn from failures and successes.



“The player/coach dynamic is like a parent/child. Your team is ALWAYS watching you as a coach. How you handle success AND how you handle adversity. React how you would want your team to react and you will gain RESPECT.

“A coach wouldn’t have a team run a play once and assume they will be able to do it in this week’s game. The same goes for character development. It must be talked about and practiced in every opportunity available.”



Youth sport reality check. What should really matter?

- #1. **Respect –compassion, caring, empathy, consideration, composure, sportsmanship.** Youth athletes can learn to play and cooperate to the best of their ability, no matter how they feel about the authority.
- #2. **Teamwork –communication, cohesiveness, collaboration, unity, unselfishness, understanding.** Working with others is a quality youth athletes will need over and over later in life. Learning how to resolve issues with teammates and coaches and how to work together with others will take them far.
- #3. **Work Ethic –accountability, integrity, commitment, diligent, honesty, initiative.** Hard work is not something that young athletes should avoid. A good work ethic will get them noticed in the workplace and beyond.
- #4. **Fun –energizers, laughter, enthusiasm, appreciation, coachability, positive attitude.** When kids are little, sports are typically kept fun, to encourage future play. But as children age, they learn that fun is also accompanied by hard work. It's important to show that the two can coexist.
- #5. **Persistence –determination, problem solving, discipline, motivation, purpose, leadership.** Kids who learn it's OK to quit become adults who give up easily—and of course, that's not the way to lead a fulfilled life. Help youth athletes find the drive to keep going.



Character Development Resources for Coaches

*Copy can be found in the CIAAA Resource Bank under:

“Athletic Director & General Coaching Resources” -then “Articles, Reading, and Other Tools for Athletic Directors”

Each of the character development activities in this booklet have been divided into the previously listed five characteristics. Many activities could fit in multiple sections:

- If you are looking for ways to help athletes get along with each other, treat opponents and refs with respect check out section one on “**Respect.**”
- If you are looking for activities to help teammates work well together check out the “**Teamwork**” section.
- If you are looking for ways to help athletes see the value in practicing and training hard, check out the “**Work Ethic**” section.
- If you are looking for some just plain fun and simple activities that your team can do together that will create laughter and build bonds, check out the “**Fun**” section.
- If you are looking for something that might be a little tricky and requires problem solving, something that teaches determination and the desire to never give up/quit? Check out the “**Persistence**” section.



Points to Consider when using Character Development Resources:

#1 **Objective** -why did you select this resource to use with your team?

-In this collection of resources, each activity has an objective listed that could be adapted and modified to meet the needs of any team.

#2 **Discussion** -The key to successfully using the resources is “intentional training”. Don’t just do the activity with the team and assume that they will automatically “learn” from the experience of the activity. Discussion is key, explain what your objective was and have a heartfelt conversation with the team. Each activity has some recommended discussion questions that you could use with your team after the activity is complete. Feel free to adapt the discussion questions and focus on what you want the team to take away from the experience.



Character Development Resource Activity #1

Activity #1 – Paired Teammate Interviews

Objective: To develop teammates that care about and understand each other. The more they know about each other the easier it will be for them to understand why a teammate acts a certain way. If athletes feel like their teammates care about them, they are more willing to be held accountable for their efforts and contributions.

Things you will need: A pen and a piece of paper with 5-6 questions they will ask their partner –one for each athlete.

Advance Planning -Instead of allowing them to pair up according to their own comfortable existing relationships, take the time to plan and pair up your team so that the individuals who NEED to know each other better and create a stronger bond have the chance to talk and share information.

Think of a list of Questions: (see resource for a list of 17 questions, feel free to create your own).

Activity: Give the pairs about 15 minutes to interview each other, and then have them share some of the answers (funniest? most interesting?) when they come back together as a group. It will take awhile to have each partner share information from the interview, but it will bring out a lot of laughter, and will open doors for future conversations between your teammates that otherwise would not have occurred.

Discussion: How can knowing someone better help you be a better teammate?



Break-Out Session #2

Share a story: regarding something that has happened to you as a coach/team, how the situation was handled and how the team grew and developed as a result of the experience.

-This could be a negative experience where there was unsportsmanlike conduct. Or a positive experience where someone on the team stepped up and showed positive leadership skills in a competitive environment where the situation could have easily gotten out of control.



Break-Out Session #3

Share a character development activity that you frequently use:

- Explain why you use this activity and how it helps to develop your athletes' character.

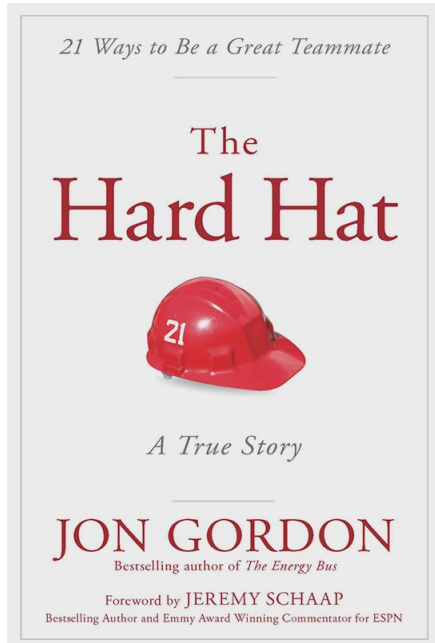


Book Studies as Resources for Character Development

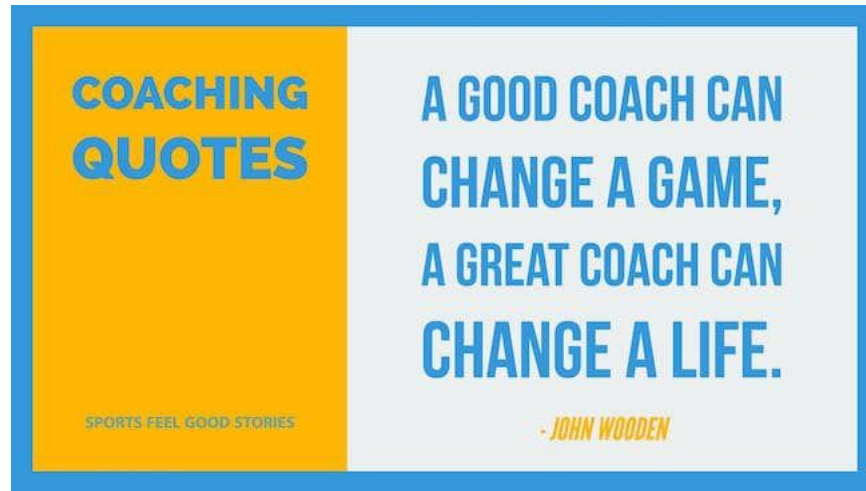
There are many excellent books out there that can be used as resources for teams and Character Development.

***I highly recommend “The Hard Hat” by Jon Gordon**

***The 21 Ways to Be a Great Teammate can easily be divided into mini discussions that could be done as a team book study or by the coach for daily lessons.**



“You don’t get the character you proclaim,
You get the character that you role model, practice and permit.”



Collection of Resources

I would be happy to put together a collection of resources from our workshop.

If you would like to share some of your resources I will put them together so that we can add them to the CIAAA Resource bank for everyone to access.

Please email any resources to myself or directly with CIAAA.

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