

Just Do It
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Heaven help youth sports if it weren't for us – the parent coaches. The fact of the matter is there would be far fewer youngsters involved in sports if our veritable army of moms and dads were not out in full force week nights and weekends, patiently cheering our little ones on.

We are wonderfully dedicated mentors, unfortunately though, sometimes we're operating with harmful misinformation. Coaches need to research what skills are age-appropriate in their particular sports. Remember one of the guiding principles behind youth sports is that of instruction.

The sport of soccer has taken off in Colorado, thanks in part to parent coaches. Community soccer fields are packed every afternoon and weekend with would-be soccer stars. The sport attracts multitudes of youth and adults because anyone – at any skill level – can play and lots of players take the field at any given time. We're lucky enough to live in Colorado, but even more fortunate to have our own Major League Soccer team, the Colorado Rapids. Log on to www.coloradorapids.com to find out how you can take the whole family to a professional soccer game.

That brings me to winning and losing. A recent study found that some 90% of young athletes said that they would prefer to play a lot on a losing team than play sparingly on a winning team. These wise youngsters don't *need* to win. Their enjoyment in their sports comes from the "doing" not the winning. We have a lot to learn from our young stars. Parents sometimes put pressure on their children and coaches to achieve victories. But where children and sports are concerned, it's not "the win," but rather the joy that comes from playing hard and having fun that matters the most.

Soccer has many skill components. Here are some FitBits™ for you parent coaches out there to help your players "get in the game":

- Research the Game – educate yourself with age appropriate skills and instructions.
- Warm Up – before play with slow jogs, jumping jacks, and bounding.
- Hydration – players should drink water before, during, and after practice or a game. After 90 minutes, sports drinks such as Gatorade are better for replacing depleted electrolytes.
- Drills – choose activity drills that mimic the sport. For soccer, have players practice multi-directional moves (forwards, backwards and side-to-side).
- Sportsmanship – be a role model for your players. Do not bad mouth the officials – they're doing the best that they can. Make sure to shake the opposing Coach's hand and have players do the same.
- Cool Down – with activities that gradually decrease exertion, followed by a set of flexibility stretches. This will help prevent injuries.
- Motivation – send the kids home with smiles on their faces.