



Redefining Winning in High School Sports

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# It's Time to Redefine -Winning!

There is an increasing concern at high school sports events. This concern is not covid and it's not the smell of sweaty bodies. It is high school and youth sport parents, coaches, spectators, and athletes behaving badly. All for the bottom line – winning and glory!

- Winning is important, but **NOT** at the expense of your school's or athlete's reputation, dignity, or mental health. The focus on winning, at all-costs, defeats the purpose of the game. Winning in high school sports should **NOT** be based on the scoreboard.
- Rethinking how we view “winning” can be taught and learned in a sports setting, and participating in sports can lead to an experience that values many forms of success, **but** only if the environment is structured and the focus is to educate and develop youth in a healthy environment.
- Redefining winning requires intentional work on behalf of the athletic organization, coach and athlete.



# Redefining Winning in High School Sports Survey Poll #1



Question:

How many ADs currently have a strategy in place that will help their coaches educate their athletes on redefining winning?

Options:

- # 1 Yes this is an athletic department focus and all coaches are doing this.
- # 2. It is up to the individual coach to decide if they want to include redefining winning and MOST are.
- # 3. It is up to the individual coach to decide if they want to include redefining winning and only a FEW coaches are.
- #4. This is not currently a focus.

# Why is it Important to Redefine Winning on School Sports Teams?

- The cheating, un-sportsperson like behavior, yelling at and abuse of officials and opponents needs to stop.
- There could be a time when your team is going through a rebuilding year and is not winning their games. Does winning and the gratification, team morale that comes from winning need to be solely based on the scoreboard? Is your team focused on winning or skills and culture? What does it mean to be successful?
- Coaches, parents and athletes may think that winning and future scholarships is the most important component of sports, but that type of pressure could lead to high levels of stress, poor mental health and the desire to quit playing sports.
- With those potential outcomes in mind it is clear that winning can not be the only objective of our school sports teams.

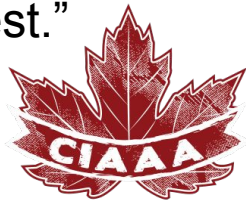


# If winning is not based on the score how can we view success?

***In high school sports we can find success in many ways. All of the small moments and achievements need to be recognized as a win!***

- It is a win if we have enough players to form a team.
- It is a win when youth recognize the value of physical fitness and chose a healthy lifestyle, displaying sportspersonship and commitment to a team.
- It is a win when the players on a team become a family and support network for each other socially and emotionally. These sport connections can help them deal with difficult and stressful situations in their personal lives.
- It is a win the first time an athlete successfully serves overhand in volleyball or makes a 3 point basket, scores a goal, or has a new “personal best.”

***Each and every moment, no matter how small it is can be seen and celebrated as a winning moment. These “feel good” moments, are motivational and will keep the joy in sports!***



# Youth sport reality check. What should really matter?

- #1. **Respect –compassion, caring, empathy, consideration, composure, sportspersonship.** 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.



# Redefining Winning Starts with School Sport Philosophy

## **What are our goals?**

Our goal is to encourage an active, healthy lifestyle within a competitive environment which applies rules to sports, as well as the conduct of student-athletes and officials in a positive manner to achieve the social and citizenship goals of education.

## **Why do we offer school sports?**

We offer school sports because we believe that athletics is an integral part of the holistic development of youth.

## **What do we want to accomplish?**

We ultimately believe that school sports are educational and will help to develop skills in sports, but most importantly, will develop citizens who conduct themselves at all times with honor and dignity.



# What does it mean to Compete?

Did you know that the word competition was derived from the Latin word *competere*, which means “**to seek together, to coincide, to agree**”? Opponents were viewed as co-creators of an experience and competition as a **process of striving with, not against, others.**

A valuable lesson you can teach in sport is the value of competing itself.

If winning a game or contest becomes the ***only way*** that an individual or team can feel successful, it sets the stage for moral and ethical challenges.

Educational outcomes like learning new skills, acquiring life skills, showing sportspersonship, adopting a healthy lifestyle and citizenship values have to be regarded highly, **even over winning.**





# Break-Out Session #1

Questions to discuss:

1. How does the determination to win lead to negative behavior by coaches, athletes and fans?
2. What could a “winning only” focus do to an athlete?
3. How can an environment be structured to redefine winning?



# Who are the role models for our athletes?

**Look at the list of famous athletes below, what 2 things do they have in common?**

Baseball: Sammy Sosa, Mark McGuire, Barry Bonds and Alex Rodriguez

Cycling: Lance Armstrong

Athletics: Ben Johnson

Basketball: Charles Oakley, Dennis Rodman, Marcus Morris

They are all winners but are well known for their choices to win at all costs. They are poor sports, playing dirty and cheating all in the name of winning.

I personally would say, that in my local school division, the basketball pro-athletes and fan mentally have had the biggest impact on my athletes. My players see basketball pros playing dirty by: attacking the glass with reckless abandonment, pushing their opponents, getting extra physical with elbows and rattling their opponents with psychological warfare. Pros have been quoted as calling this type of play “gamesmanship” -doing whatever it takes to win a game.



# Pro-Sports is NOT School Sports

***How athletes and fans behave is a learned behavior.***

Our athletes watch their sports heroes on TV and want to be like them someday.

Our society permits certain behaviors. When you go to professional level hockey, football and basketball games the culture is not one of sportsmanship, but instead depicts a win at all costs mentality. These teams are playing for profit. If they are not winning the coach is fired and a new one is hired. If the athlete is not performing and helping their team win, they are replaced. If an athlete is successful they are rewarded financially. In that type of environment everyone is judging others and comparing / pitting them against each other. The fans jeer and taunt and boo, instead of “cheering” for their own team. There appears to be more of a focus on cheering against the opponent. The sports reporters add to this by criticizing the officials and the players. This is what society sees and hears and therefore they learn emulate and accept this.



# Poor Role Models in Sports



On Sunday, April 3, 2022, after Cleveland's loss to Philadelphia, Cavaliers coach J.B. Bickerstaff was hit with a \$15,000 fine for publicly criticizing the officials. Bickerstaff was unhappy with the amount of calls given to Sixers stars and he let his feelings be known. He was quoted as saying: "We deserved to win that game. That game was taken from us"

At the beginning of March he was ejected from the game and also fined \$20,000 by the NBA for this...

Sadly, images like this and comments like this seem to be the norm. School athletes and coaches see this. It becomes common place to complain about officials. Athletes, coaches, fans are acting this way and it needs to end. We **must** respect officials.

# Redefining Winning in High School Sports

## Survey Poll #2



Question:

Can you think of an example that has happened at your school with your coaches/athletes/fans regarding unsportsmanlike behavior and or disrespect for opponents/officials? All in the name of “cheering” and winning at all costs?

Options:

# 1 Yes

# 2. No

Reflection:

Is there work that needs to be done to change this culture in your school?

# Break-Out Session #1 -Follow-up Thoughts

Questions to discuss:

1. How does the determination to win lead to negative behavior by coaches, athletes and fans? -determination to win at all costs leads to: cheating, bending rules, disrespect of opponents, screaming, yelling, swearing at players and officials, attitude of being better than others, being too competitive in everything and not a team player, judging others instead of lifting them up. Poor sportspersonship and the willingness to do anything to win. Fans -Jeer not cheer, taunt instead of compliment.
2. What could a “winning only” focus do to an athlete?  
-lead to anxiety/stress/self-doubt and fear of making a mistake in front of others, cause then to react in violent/rude/aggressive behaviours, lead to the use of illegal drugs as a means of winning, cause them to always blame others/not taking responsibility, unwilling to choose the positive, moral behavior in high stakes situations.
3. How can an environment be structured to redefine winning?  
-See strategies on the next several slides



## Before coaches start a redefining winning focus with their athletes, coaches will need to be willing to put the following strategies into practice.

1. Learn and model the core values of school sport philosophy and coaching in the interscholastic environment.
2. Be a role model- a coach should show their sportspersonship and respect to opponents, team members, and the officials. Athletes will follow a coach's step and thinking in regards to winning.
3. Be an integral part of the school system and its educational contribution. Emphasize that the purpose of the interscholastic sports is to teach sports skills AND life lessons. The athletic area is a classroom with moral and educational obligations.
4. Use sports moments to **enhance participants' education** and help them **develop critical life skills**, teaching student-athletes how to experience success in both victory and defeat.
5. Plan for a significant focus on the development/teaching of **citizenship skills and values**, starting Day 1.
6. Promote, expect and reinforce good sportspersonship and the language of sportspersonship right from the beginning and at all times during the season.
7. Advocate for and role model healthy lifestyle choices.
8. Reinforce continually that participating in interscholastic sports is and should be fun.
9. Help each athlete develop and achieve his or her all-around potential.
10. Follow the rules explicitly and reinforce fair play and sportspersonship at all times.



## Redefining Winning in High School Sports Survey Poll #3



Question:

Do you as an Athletic Director provide your coaches with strategies they can use as a coach?

Options:

- # 1. Coaches expectations and strategies are clearly communicated and are in our Athletic Handbook **AND** the coach signs a contract agreeing to abide by the handbook.
- # 2. Coaches expectations and strategies are clearly communicated but there s no written documentation for this.
- # 3. Coaches expectations are clearly communicated **BUT** no strategies are provided.
- #4. Coaches expectations and strategies are **NOT** formally communicated.



**We didn't make  
playoffs, but...**



**How a Coach  
Can Re-Define  
Success**



# Coaching Moments

How do we redefine success and the societal trend to focus on the bottom line?  
How do we stop equating success with winning only?

Keeping sport in perspective is a good start.

Let's attempt to focus our conversations with youth around the healthy goals of sport – respect, fun and development.

After games let's start by asking if they had fun or talk about what a joy it was to give it all.

Emphasize what they control – their effort, improvement, and teamwork, for example. These alternate meanings of success can help them maintain their self-confidence even during slumps and losing seasons, and can in fact make them very strong in future adverse situations.



# Coaching Quotes

“The player/coach dynamic is like a parent/child. Your team is **ALWAYS** watching you as a coach. How you handle winning AND how you handle adversity during a game. They see how you treat/talk about opponents and officials. React how you would want your team to react and you will promote **RESPECT**.”

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

“A good coach can change a game.  
A great coach can change a life”



# Redefining Winning with Parents

Sport parents and friends tend to be actively involved in the games from the sidelines. It is key to maintain open communication with parents about the intended objectives of school sport. One of the objectives of school sport is to inspire student-athletes to improve themselves while showing respect to others, even when facing adversity.

- #1 Before the season starts I strongly recommend all coaches have a Pre-season meeting with all Parents and review their Athletic Handbook and Expectations. Encourage parents to be leaders in the stands.
- #2 Have a contract within your Athletic Handbook for parents to sign. My handbook has a code of ethics for parents, samples of “suggested positive behavior” for parents, suggested “unacceptable behavior”, parent/coach methods of communication -including appropriate things to discuss with a coach and issues that are NOT appropriate to discuss.
- #3 Have the parents ask themselves and then ask their athlete the following questions. Then have the parents reflect on the answers. Why is my child playing this sport? What are my goals for my child? What would a successful season look like?



# Redefining Winning with Fans

- #1 Have an announcer at the start of each game read a script regarding respect and sportspersonship expectations. Have the announcer prepared to repeat the message if necessary during time-outs or half-time breaks.
- #2 Have signage on the walls of your gymnasium encouraging sportspersonship.
- #3 Promote a school spirit culture which educates all students on appropriate methods of cheering for, supporting and representing their school at school events.
- #4 Have school staff present in the stands to help set the tone. School sports includes many volunteer community coaches that might not feel confident addressing fan behavior. Having staff present is highly beneficial.



# Spectator Codes of Conduct

**The guiding principle for all sports activities regarding spectator conduct at all school events should be that all participants (players, coaches and officials) deserve respect and consideration.**

- Fans must cheer showing their support “for” their team, not disrespect for their opponents. It will be unacceptable for fans to make noise of any kind during situations such as foul shot in basketball or during a serve in volleyball.
- Fans are asked to not applaud errors by opponents, nor heckle, jeer, or distract members of the opposing team.
- Fans **MUST** respect the officials and not criticize.
- Fans must respect the property and the authority of school officials.
- School sports should have a ZERO Tolerance policy for any misconduct that doesn't meet the above listed codes of conduct.



# Redefining Winning with Athletes

**Success in high school sport is defined by much more than the final result of the competition.**

- Redefining winning helps you to ensure that your student-athletes enjoy the best possible athletics experience in a school sport environment.
- We need to teach our athletes to focus on “how to” win and play great versus “having to” win and play great. This focus on development will help youth to keep a positive mindset.
- Being able to participate in a non-threatening environment is what allows student-athletes to experience success in both victory and defeat.
- Students can learn from mistakes, establish and commit to realistic goals.
- Learn from constructive feedback.
- Honor the game
- Value the role of officials
- Encourage respect for teammates, opponents and officials.



# Code of Ethics for Student Athletes

- #1 Conduct themselves at all times with honor and dignity.
- #2 Treat visiting team, spectators and officials as honored guests.
- #3 Faithfully complete all schoolwork as practical evidence of their loyalty to school and team.
- #4 Show that it is a privilege to represent their schools.







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**How an Athlete  
can Focus on  
their Performance and  
Not compare themselves  
with others or compete just  
to beat others.  
Redefining their own  
Success!**



# Redefining Winning -Change terminology to Success!

**It is not about Winning -it is about finding Success.**

Your ability level or success as an athlete is not defined by if you win or do better than someone else, it is found within yourself. Being proud of yourself and knowing that you did everything you could. Letting your focus shift to others will take away from your achievements and the joy of the game.

Improving is succeeding. How an athlete perceives success will have an impact on their athletic experience. Although winning is a strong motivating factor for athletes, long-term development and performance are more likely to occur when they evaluate themselves based on tasks they can control, rather than winning or losing.



## Break-Out Session #2

**Share a story or reflect on:** something that has happened to you as a coach/team, as a result of winning or losing a game. How was the situation handled and how did the team grow and develop as a result of the experience?



“Winning at the professional level is required. Winning at the college level has become expected. Winning at the high school level should be a pleasant by-product of what you’re really supposed to be doing, which is developing young people into productive citizens.”

-Robert Kanaby -NFHS



As adults we need to snap youth and high school sport back into perspective.

We need to REDEFINE what it means to be successful.

Success is more than the scoreboard or the scholarship.

Success does not have to be embarrassing someone by scoring and then celebrating at their expense.

Success should be more about the original goals of youth and high school sport – respect, having fun, making friends, learning life lessons and skills, and developing your physical and psychological skills.

These goals are often forgotten or deemphasized during competition.



# Resources Used in Creating this Presentation

## **“Coaching School Sport: Redefining Winning”**

School Sport Canada <https://www.schoolsport.ca/elearning/>

## **“It’s Time to Redefine – Success”**

By: Larry Lauer, Institute for the Study of Youth Sports Michigan State University <http://assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0010/1786/RedefineSuccess.pdf>

