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HOW SPORTS DEVELOP GOOD CHARACTER OF PERSON

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“That which we persist in doing becomes easier for us to do; not that the nature of the thing itself is changed, but that our power to do is increased.” -Emerson

Sports are physical activities usually played with 2 or more people. Sports are not computer games even Wii computer games. If sports do not have any physical activities then they will not develop a good character. If sports do have physical activity, Sports will develop good characters because they work someone out, allow people to meet and work with new friends, and they make self confidence. Sports good character comes sometimes by working the person out. What I mean by working that person out is making them physically tired and being pushed also helps.

Allowing people to make new friends and work with them, which you do in sports, makes them athletes have better character. In sports you usually do it with new people who you don't know the first day, and you are usually shy with them. But later, you get more confident and less shy.

Sports develop good character by developing self confidence. Self confidence is when you are confident of yourself that you can do something yourself and it brings you to understanding your limits. But it also makes you know when you can break a limit or when you can't push yourself any further.

Developing Character through Sport/Athletic Participation

“Sport develops character.” This statement is heralded as a positive purpose of athletic participation in sports programs on all levels. This is contrasted by daily media reports of grave misconduct at every level of athletics. Numerous studies have been conducted to answer the question: “Does sport build character?” No specific consensus has been

drawn by these studies, but they have generated a great deal of debate. Can sports participation result in positive outcomes in character development? Can the sport environment be modified or controlled to optimize positive outcomes? Character development is more than simply developing specific positive personal qualities. It needs to be holistic and synergistic. A person of character possesses positive qualities which can be applied appropriately to decisions and effective outcomes. Brown (2003, p.39) defines the process as “this is what we believe, so therefore, this is what we will do, and this is what will be seen.”

- What kind of an environment is effective in developing character?
- Is there an opportunity/ability to make choices? Are these choices threaded with accountability - defined as agency?
- Are there consequences associated with agency?

Does there exist a way by which a person/s can reflect/assess use of agency in the context of time and inherent consequences. Is there a means by which choices can be modified and/or corrected? Is the need for tension created between positive and negative choices present, and the potential of choices of good/better/best? These possibilities exist within the sport environment. Often, the sport environment is viewed as unreal - as just a game. As Tod & Hodge (2001, p.309) state, “athletes' perceive sport as different from real life.” Yet sports participation surpasses reading, discussions, and role playing environments because it is

“experienced”, and sport provides spontaneity - situations are unplanned, unforeseen, and unique. Responses are based on the application of concepts, and accountability becomes real, mirroring the agency found in real life. Sports participation is valued because it mirrors real life in that psychological states are attached. Sport provides ethos and context (Jones & McNamee, 2000). The pursuit of sport may well be unique in that the activity itself provides a logical connection to morality, and the opportunity to reveal/produce numerous desirable qualities (Arnold 1994). Sports participation can reveal a person’s positive/negative character traits. Sports can establish perceptions about what character is, and it can contrast virtuous behavior with non-virtuous behavior.

Axiology defines three dimensions of value: the highest being intrinsic - individual uniqueness; the second highest being extrinsic - comparison such as good/better/best; and third highest being systemic - fairness (Clear Direction, Inc., 2001). Athletics has the intrinsic value of being fun, the extrinsic value of competition/comparison, and the systemic value of rules/fairness.

Often, tension and imbalance exist between the dimensions (Clear Direction, Inc., 2001). This means an athlete may love to win, but have an obligation to play by the rules. A player may enjoy playing the game, but to continue to play at higher levels must train and gain self-mastery. An athlete may desire to win so badly that he/she finds ways to cheat.

A further application is that richness/balance can be applied to life (Clear Direction, Inc., 2001). Possibilities exist for developing character through steady improvement in all three value dimensions and by maintaining balance, individuals and society can gain greater richness. If a person can achieve greater value in one dimension and maintain balance, then the value gained may transfer to the other dimensions. An example is Coach John Wooden. He worked daily on his Pyramid of Success, which incorporates all the value dimensions to establish balance. Due to this lifetime of effort/progress, his life has greater intrinsic value/individual uniqueness, greater extrinsic value through numerous accomplishments, and greater

systemic value through fairness and honesty. Because he has maintained balance within the dimensions, his influence continues. An upward spiral in the attainment of character is gained through this process. As the level of play becomes more elite, tension in the extrinsic dimension increases, with focus being on winning and self-improvement. Studies often show conflicting results about character development via sports participation, including positive moral and social character for youth participants (Fullinwider, 2006). Other studies show increases in social character and declines in moral character at more elite levels of sports participation (Stoll & Others, 1995; Rudd & Stoll, 2004).

Work Ethic

Sports are one of the first places young people learn for themselves about the value of working hard. They may have heard about work ethic elsewhere, but when a baseball player goes to practice and takes ground balls for 20 minutes or steps in the batting cage and takes 15 swings, he knows he is getting better with each swing he takes. Working hard will help athletes improve and give better performances on the field.

Teamwork

Playing a team sport helps youngsters learn a lesson about the importance of working with team-mates to accomplish a common goal. A young basketball player may not take the shot or make the pass that sets up the shot. However, she may set the pick that allows the shooter to get open. The player setting the pick is helping her team accomplish its goal even if she does not get credit on the score sheet for the basket.

Handling Adversity

When you play a sport as a youngster, winning is not usually the part of the experience that receives the most emphasis. However, all teams will try to win the game. Sometimes they may be successful. Other times they may fall short. Youngsters will have to learn that they cannot win every game and every championship. In many cases, it hurts to lose. But youngsters must learn to pick themselves up and keep moving forward to the next game or the next season.

Learning to bounce back and be resilient will pay benefits throughout a youngster's lifetime.

Competitive Effort

Youth sports may not be about winning and losing, but one of the key lessons to learn is to compete as hard as possible in everything you do on the athletic field. You are competing with the players on the other team, but you are also competing with yourself. You must show how well you can play in difficult situations. You may not be able to control whether you win or lose, but you can give your best effort every time you step on the field, court or ice.

According to studies in the field of character development and athletics – the longer a player plays in the higher levels and the higher levels they reach the more morally callus they become. The myth in America is that sports builds character. That's not true at all in a win-at-all-costs culture. Sports don't build character unless a coach intentionally teaches it. High school athletes cut more moral and ethical corners than non high school athletes. College athletes cut more corners than non college athletes and it goes all the way up through the professional ranks. There is a tremendous need for character development because we are modelling and teaching and allowing the opposite of that to take place.

The issue of character development is so important, in fact, that the White House had its first ever "National Character Counts Week". In addition, the NCAA recognizes the importance of character development in its CHAMPS/Life Skills Initiative. It is increasingly clear that the issue of character development is worthy of significant consideration in athletics and in society. It is clear that there is no perfect formula for delivering a character development program, and there are many possible ways to spread the message. The key is to find the platform that most appropriately suits your style. Many coaches want to mentor their players and help make them become better human beings, but they lack the training, thought process, and ability to fully maximize their full potential as the coach and mentor.

Aside from understanding the methodology behind character development, another essential element is that coaches must be 100% committed to character development within his/her program. Character development it cannot be a one-off, it has to be fully integrated with your program. In essence, character development must be at the core of your program and must be equally as important as every other aspect of the program including winning. It cannot be casually or randomly inserted at convenient times.

Sharon Stoll is a leading expert in character development and a professor at the Centre for Ethics at the University of Idaho's College of Education. Stoll has spent much of her career studying the values and morals of athletes. The results of the study indicate that many athletes are deficient in moral reasoning, and that sports have moved away from honourable behaviour with more emphasis on winning at all costs and material rewards.

Sportsmanship and the development of positive character have long been explicit goals of school sports. A strong belief exists that sport programs have the power to promote the development of "...sportsmanlike behaviors, ethical decision-making skills, and a total curriculum for moral character development" (Stoll, 1995, p. 335) and provide a social environment to acquire personal and social values and behaviors contributing to good character and good citizenship (Arnold, 1984; Sage, 1998.)

Terminology

Two different types of character values exist and are evident in sport: social and moral. Typical social character values include loyalty, dedication, sacrifice, teamwork, and good citizenship (Lumpkin, Stoll & Beller, 2002), while moral values include honesty, fairness, fair play, justice, and responsibility. Social values, which are highly esteemed in our society, are about the real world and how society views the importance of social character. Moral values are first principles, meaning that they stand by themselves; if we violate any one of these, we violate people directly. Social values are positive assets but must be tempered by moral values. A

person who has strong social character may have little or no moral character. An individual can be highly dedicated and loyal to an immoral cause. Because sport may foster social values, character development through sport should help athletes learn to weigh a social value against a moral value and then act on that moral value (Lumpkin, et al., 2002).

Sportsmanship/fair play means playing as a good sport and following the moral values of honesty and justice (Lumpkin et al., 2002). The player plays by the rules and is fair and honest to his/her opponents.

"Character education refers to the deliberate and intentional activity of cultivating, modeling, and teaching moral growth and moral judgment" (Stoll, 2000, p.3). The goal of this process is for individuals to build moral habits with a disposition to act upon moral judgment (Kohlberg, 1981).

Components of Moral Character

Moral character development is a combined lifelong formal and informal educational process (Stoll & Beller, 1999) with three interrelated dimensions: knowing, valuing, and doing the right thing (Lickona, 1989), with the result being moral character.

INFORMAL CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAMS ENVIRONMENT

The informal process of moral character development is highly influenced by the environment ("...all of life's lived experiences, which begins with our immediate families, family traditions, family values, religious training, and family history...school work and play,") as well as television, newsprint, sports, and movies (Stoll & Beller, 1999, p. 2). While individuals learn from their family, traditions, friends, and religious groups, when they enter the world of sport, they tend to be heavily influenced by what their peers value and practice. Societal norms, values, and practices in general and in sport also shape the environment as does the media through television, movies, and newsprint (Stoll, 2000). In order to affect character positively, environmental character education programs attempt to shape the groups that influence the athlete's thinking and behavior

to encourage the athlete's moral actions so they are more respectful to others.

Codes of Ethics attempt to address the environment through prescribing player, coach, and parental behaviour. These codes are grounded in principles that concern ethical conduct towards colleagues, athletes, and the community (Lumpkin et al., 2002). For codes to be effective in shaping the environment, education about the organization's values and code must occur.

Team Sports and Character Development in Children

Character counts for a lot because it is often character that helps a person survive in the tough times. Character and a strong spirit most definitely count for a lot but they are not achieved without sustained effort. That means character must be developed and, hopefully, developed while still a child. This, of course, does raise questions as to how one can develop positive character traits. There are many ways children can start the foundation to develop a good character and enrolling in team sports is one of them.

Playing team sports helps a child understand the importance of being able to work well with others. This is sometimes overlooked when kids involve themselves in video games and other solo pursuits. Upon becoming involved with team sports, a child will quickly discover the highly important value of working with others. These skills can then be moulded into the child and carry on into the workplace later on in life.

Of course, the child will also learn that it is helpful when others are team players as well. When the child notices other members of the team are self-absorbed, he/she will have a clear understanding that such behavior is not helpful and, most definitely, should be avoided.

Goal setting is another huge benefit a child will develop when involved in team sports. This also contributes greatly to a child's character enhancement as well. Actually, it can do so in a number of ways and all of them are quite

positive. Goal setting shows a child that he/she can achieve anything that he has his mind set on as long as he sticks with the course of action needed to achieve said goals.

Team sports also teach kids how to deal with adversities in life. When you lose a game, you need to click your proverbial heels together and move on. If you are not awarded the number one position you wish to play, you learn to deal with it. Life does not always deliver the outcomes we expect and that is something most children need to learn early in life and in a positive way. Team sports are the perfect vehicle for this type of learning bar none. Overall, team sports are a tremendous venture for character development in children. This is why it is so recommended that they enroll in such programs. The positives outweigh the negatives significantly and team sports are well worth exploring. Really, children develop excellent character traits from them which is why they are so highly recommended.

When a person is new to a sport, he has to work hard to improve his proficiency at it. This takes time and patience as one cannot achieve milestones overnight. Depending on his ability, he may take weeks, or even months just to hit a ball correctly or run a certain distance successfully.

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Youth sports can be a significant opportunity for young people to grow and mature. When youngsters play on an organized sports team, they are playing to enjoy themselves, improve, and get sufficient exercise. However, one of the most important by-products of playing sports is the character that comes with developing work ethic, learning about teamwork and dealing with adversity.