

Bolstering Self-Esteem in Young Athletes

by Daniel Ferrell

It's not always the best athlete that performs the best on Saturdays. More often than not it is the player with the most confidence in him/herself and a good understanding of what it means to play within his/her own limits. Simply put, positive self-esteem equals positive performance.

By positive self-esteem I mean believing in yourself and being happy with what you see every morning when you look in the mirror. This is not something that a person acquires over night. I believe that one's life experiences, up bringing, and interactions with youth league coaches and teachers influence a child's self-esteem. Positive reinforcement in the form of social praise gives children a sense of accomplishment and gratification. This leads to enthusiasm and a willingness to try harder or at least as hard as he/she tried before. Improvement is eminent and the chance of future success is greater when you treat a young athlete who is just learning the sport with positive regard whether you're critiquing or congratulating them.

So remember this when a child drops the game winning touchdown or strikes out in the bottom of the ninth with the tying run on third. How you react may very well determine the path that child's playing career takes.