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10 Responsible Sports Resolutions for 2011:

In the spirit of New Years Resolutions, we offer you these ten resolutions for creating and reinforcing a Responsible Sports environment for our youth athletes today. We hope you'll join us in trying to keep these resolutions in the coming year.

- 1. Focus on skills not scores.** Too much attention to the scoreboard comes at the expense of attention to other types of success. When youth athletes focus on learning and improving skills, they are taking steps toward immediate and long-term success. Setting attainable skills goals and then reaching them helps kids at every position and in every team role enjoy their sport experience and continue playing.
- 2. Cheer for efforts not outcomes.** This resolution helps athletes concentrate on what they can control. In some sports, outcomes (goals, runs, points) are few and far between, often non-existent for players in defensive positions. But every player can contribute effort that can be the difference maker in a game. Cheer for these efforts will keep them coming.
- 3. Give your kids space.** Sports is an environment to learn powerful life lessons, and many come through challenges and adversity and can be even more powerful when kids learn the lessons for themselves. In the age of "helicopter parents", resolve to resist the temptation to solve issues for your kids in sports. Not getting enough playing time? Encourage your kid to talk to the coach directly to make a case for an enhanced role. Sports is a terrific space to learn and grow if we parents give our kids the space to do so.
- 4. Commit to the 5:1 ratio.** It's hard. We know. But giving kids feedback in a ratio of five positives to one negative can be the difference between a kid hearing your feedback and not hearing it, the difference between continuing to play or quitting. In the beginning, the 5:1 ratio may require writing it down to get the hang of it. But the more you practice it, the easier it becomes.
- 5. Brush it off.** If you're committed to the principles of Responsible Sports, you've probably taught your athlete the idea of brushing off mistakes and moving forward. But are you practicing what you advocate? Do you brush off missed calls by the referee? Do you brush off mistakes made by athletes on the field? If not, your child probably will not do so either.
- 6. Participate positively.** If last year you were frustrated by your child's youth sports experience, take a look in the mirror and try a different approach. Rather than complaining about coaches, arguing calls and riding your kids about their sports, try taking an oath: only say something if you have something good to say. Otherwise, refrain.
- 7. Thank coaches and officials.** Coaches oftentimes only hear from disgruntled parents and athletes. Have you ever thanked a coach for teaching your child a new skill or for being another adult for your child to turn to in tough times? Coaches have emotional tanks that need to be filled too. Do your part! As for officials, we'd like to issue you this challenge: find one opportunity this season to thank the officials. If you see them get a tough call right, let them know after the game.
- 8. Value the opponent.** In an attempt to motivate athletes, sometimes we become negative when it comes to our opponents. But the truth is, we need our opponent to even be able to play the game. A worthy opponent challenges us to be better than we thought we could be. We rise to the challenge and learn in both victory and defeat. Without a worthy opponent, we wouldn't have those opportunities. Resolve to value and honor your opponents and encourage your child to do the same.
- 9. Become a partner in your child's youth sports experience.** Join the team of adults who are supporting positive youth sports experiences. Talk to your child's coach and ask how you can help - with your child in particular and with team as a whole. Volunteer to help out the team Mom or Dad. Offer your assistance to the league.
- 10. Participate in the Responsible Sports dialog.** Resolve to share your thoughts, ideas and experiences with fellow parents and coaches this year. The youth sports experience is not just black and white, but also shades of grey that challenge all of us. By sharing your thoughts, you can not only get advice for folks going through the same challenges, but you could also help others out there who might be struggling with a situation. Resolve to share your experiences to help make youth sports better.