

When winning becomes the major focus, sportsmanship takes a backseat

Jim Hallihan, a board member and guest blogger, shares a story with us on the importance of communication between parents and coaches.

For the first time ever at the Summer Iowa Games we had a fight between parents and coaches of a Gold Medal winning team in youth softball (12 and under). In the 2010 Games this same team had won the sportsmanship medals even though they lost all the games by wide margins. So this year the coach decided to make the team more competitive just two weeks before the Iowa Games by adding two players from other communities who were supposedly very good. Now remember these are 12 year olds.

Following the championship game a parent who was not happy with her daughter's playing time assaulted the coach and the coach's wife was assaulted by the unhappy parent's niece. Three people were arrested including the coach on disorderly conduct. Even though the parent was completely out of line and probably was a problem all season long, adding players to make the team better is a recipe for disaster when you reduce playing time for those who have been on the team the entire season.

The most important thing coaches can teach is how to model the Six Pillars of Character and to develop better citizens. Communication between parents and coaches is essential with an emphasis on players learning the skills necessary to improve, having fun, as well as having an opportunity for equal playing time on the team.