

Learning Guide #2 For Watching the Olympic Games/Sporting Events with Children

Negative Effects of Poor Sporting Behavior

Watching the Olympic Games or a sports event can be a valuable learning experience for young people. The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) has developed a series of learning guides for adults and children to use while watching sports on television or in person to promote healthy dialogue. This guide suggests certain observations and presents several questions to discuss together. The learning guide concludes with a brief summary of important facts regarding the topic.

Observation and discussion questions: Negative Effects of Poor Sporting Behavior

While you watch the Olympic Games or a sports event:

- Pay attention to individual athletes and teams. Point out examples when athletes display poor sport behaviors.
- Do athletes and coaches argue with opponents? Do you see them acting aggressively towards opponents?
- Why do you think this happens?
- Do you see coaches and athletes questioning the officials in an appropriate manner? Or are the coaches and athletes arguing with officials?
- Watch how the athletes and coaches interact with each other. Are teammates making negative remarks towards one another? Are they arguing with each other? How do you think this behavior impacts the game or competition?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you argued with an official? Yelled at a teammate? Disrespected your coach? What was the situation that forced you to behave in that manner? What was the end result? What could you have done differently?
- Think about the rules of the sport you are watching. Examples of negative sporting behavior often relate to not following all the rules. Do you see athletes and coaches doing this? How does this impact the game?
- What are the consequences of negative sporting behaviors? Does behaving in this manner undermine the positive aspects of sport and competition? What can you do to change your behavior in sport?

Lesson Conclusion

Research on athletes and coaches shows that appropriate sporting behavior can be developed in both game and practice situations. Positive sporting behavior is important because it can affect team cohesion, respect among opponents, and emotional control. Athletes also learn important lessons in sport that will transfer to other settings, such as school and non sport activities. However, when elite or professional athletes use negative behavior in sport (e.g., arguing with officials, not playing by the rules, disrespecting opponents, yelling at teammates), it teaches these behaviors to young athletes. That is why it is so important to talk about good and bad examples of sport behavior. Young athletes need to learn what behaviors are acceptable, the impact of negative sporting behaviors (e.g., penalties, conflict with teammates). Help young athletes avoid believing that poor sporting behavior is appropriate.

What is critical in the discussion of poor sporting behaviors is that this behavior is a choice. For example, athletes can choose to walk away from a disagreement or choose to argue about it. By pointing out negative behaviors, you then can help young athletes think of positive ways to act in such situations. And remember, you are a role model for your child. When you respond positively, you set good examples for athletes of all ages.

AASP encourages adults to do their part to create a supportive youth sport environment so children will develop a lifelong interest in physical activity and sports. By teaching fundamental sporting principles, you can help children develop winning attitudes, both in sports and throughout life.

Prepared by Dr. Karen Collins, a professor in the Department of Kinesiology: Sport Studies, at the University of New Hampshire in Durham. She also serves on the Organizational Outreach Committee of AASP.

The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) promotes the ethical practice, science and advocacy of sport and exercise psychology. Founded in 1986, AASP is an international, multidisciplinary, professional organization that offers certification to qualified professionals who practice sport and exercise psychology. With more than 1,200 members in 28 countries, AASP is a worldwide leader, sharing research and resources with the public via its Web site, www.appliedsportpsych.org.

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