

This statement serves as a philosophical guide for behavior, policy, and decision making of GCYAA. It is not the policy and procedures document of GCYAA. All parents and coaches should strive to adopt this philosophy to enhance the youth sport experience of the child.

Core Beliefs

- Each athlete has potential; develop it.
- Each athlete is capable of doing something to positively affect the team; help them to discover what that is.
- Each athlete has a strength; identify and enhance it.
- See what the athlete CAN do and figure out how to utilize that skill rather than focusing upon what they CAN'T do.
- Develop self-efficacy of every athlete by
 - documenting accomplishments
 - helping them to develop an adversity quotient
 - teaching assertiveness
 - demonstrating the power of listening
 - emphasizing existing talents
- An environment of trust leads to more risk taking, innovation, and creativity and will be reflected in greater productivity by the students/players.
- Do no harm, physically and psychologically. Put the well-being of the participants first.

People Values

- It is the teacher/coach that makes the difference
- Trust and respect each other; be a serving leader
- Open, honest, timely, clear, and emotion-free communication.
- Do not rip a player in public; try not use the player as an example--either good or bad
- Use specific praise regularly; use general praise sparingly
- Keep students/athletes involved
- Motivate positively; our most valuable skill is our ability to motivate

Performance Values

- Overtly recognize small successes and good tries as process to improvement.
- Recognize and teach the difference between discipline and procedures-- and punishment.
- Conform to requirements, procedures, standards, and policies.
- Strive to continuously improve; this is the ultimate definition of success, not wins/losses
- Objective, competency/performance-based, evaluation of student/athletes.
- Be able to answer these two questions for each player:
 - Where/how/what does he/she need to improve?
 - What happens if he/she doesn't get better?
- Reinforce that performance is evaluated and judged but it is not and cannot be an indicator of personal worth
- Correct performance immediately, and specifically; criticize the performance, not the person, if they are not doing what you want.
- Develop discrepancy in those student/athletes who say they want something, but seem to be doing something else. Teach them how to develop discrepancy in their own beliefs
- There is more to the game than the score.
- Performance is a function of ability and motivation.

Parent-Coach Relationship

Both parenting and coaching are very difficult vocations. By establishing an understanding of each position, we are better able to accept the actions of the other party and provide greater benefit to our children. Thoughtful parents are reluctant to interfere and hesitate to remove a player from a team and discourage a player from quitting during the season because they “don’t get along with the coach”. If the parent perceives a problem with the coach, the successful youth sport parent exercises reason and non-emotional judgment and does not necessarily and automatically rush to defend the player in a given situation. Most of the time, problems are simply learning opportunities for the child. But in the end it is important that the parent not become a wedge between the player and the coach. The following information comes from NAYS, ASEP, and sport psychologist Dr. Tom Tutko.

What Parents Should Expect from the Coach

- Does the coach keep winning in perspective and emphasize skill development, process, and progress, or does the coach want to win at all costs?
- Is the coach consistent in discipline/punishment from player to player?
- Does the coach do what he/she says they are going to do? Or does the coach just tell parents what they want to hear to avoid hurt feelings or confrontations?
- What is the coach’s motivation for coaching?
- Does the coach keep his/her ego out of it?
- What are the team goals for the season?
- How is success measured?
- How are the different skill levels of members of the team handled?
- Does coach know the rules of the sport?
- Does coach know the fundamental skills that need to be taught at this level?
- Does coach know how to TEACH those fundamental skills in a fun environment?
- Does coach possess an understanding of basic first aid and athletic training principles?
- Does the coach adhere to an emergency plan should a child be injured during participation?
- Is coach sensitive to the emotions and needs of each individual player?
- When the kid makes a mistake, which is inevitable, does coach build them up or put them down?
- Is coach’s leadership style based upon intimidation and fear or upon empathy and encouragement?
- Does coach share any of the decision making with the players?
- What does coach do to ensure safe practices and games?
- Does the coach ‘coach’ the game and players or focus on the officiating?
- Does coach maintain composure in emotionally trying situations?
- Does coach communicate the risks of the sport and properly coach the correct technique to mitigate those risks?
- Does coach’s actions and words communicate positive emotions and feelings?
- Does coach know when to listen?
- Does coach communicate expectations for the team and for all members of the squad?
- Does coach demonstrate a willingness to listen to their (parents and players) concerns and issues?
- Does coach publicize locations and times of all practices and contests with the understanding that weather and the constraints of possible league affiliations sometimes require short-term notice and changes of venue and time?
- Is coach able to provide an answer to these questions, at any time during the season, but especially at the end:
 - What is the problem, if any? What does my child need to improve?
 - What does my child need to do to improve? What happens if my child does not improve?

What Coaches Should Be Able to Expect from Parents

- Notification, in advance if possible, of any and all scheduling conflicts you and your family have with practices and contests; this would include illness.
- Specific concerns, rather than broad, general complaints, about a coach's philosophy and/or expectations.
- Personal communication about treatment of their/son daughter or any other issue that might be of concern to the parent.
- A commitment to provide the child with proper equipment and encourage its proper use, including the necessity to have the child's equipment at practice/games with the child.
- To not interfere with the coach unless he/she has clearly erred.
- To encourage the child to finish what they start; to not allow the child to casually start and stop team associations wherever and whenever the child chooses
- Self-control; the parent should be an example of appropriate behavior, in and out of competition.
- A commitment to have the child at the practices and games; it is not fair to the coach or other members of the team to have the child miss without advance notice. It is also unfair for the child to miss practices and games and then expect to have subsequent playing time.

Problems for Parents to Watch for in Youth Sports and Appropriate Concerns to Discuss with Coaches

- Player being physically abused by another player or one of the coaches.
- Player being unjustly criticized or punished.
- Player being subjected to too much pressure to achieve—either by the coach or parent.
- Not receiving skill instruction; coach must identify ways to help the child improve
- Receiving only criticism for mistakes rather than encouragement with correction.
- Being made fun of by peers or team members with no response or intervention from the coach.
- An injury that is not being properly attended to.
- Not understanding a sophisticated strategy or skill which then results in a loss of interest or lack of fun.
- Concerns about your own child's behavior.
- Playing time if the child is fulfilling all duties, expectations, and obligations of practice/game behavior and is still not playing. Especially at youth sports level, parents should be able to expect a reasonable amount of playing time for their child in return for commitment at practices and attendance when required. If the coach is making a reasonable effort to include/play your child, you cannot expect that he/she will play ALL of the time or in a particular position you desire. If the child is abruptly benched for some reason or does not play at all, it is ok to determine the reason and seek ways to solve the problem.

Strategies for Confronting a Coach about an Issue

- Wait until after the game or practice. Calm down, think through the situation, gather information from your son/daughter, then call the coach at his/her home. Absolutely do not try to confront a coach in front of other parents, coaches, or players.
- When the parent talks to the coach, the parent should try to explain the concern as completely, clearly, and unemotionally as possible and then allow the coach to speak. It is generally not the parent's role to reprimand.
- Approach the coach in a positive way; do not accuse.
- Listen to the coach's explanation, then repeat his/her main points in your own words to verify the essence of the explanation.
- Do not demand that the coach follow your request or even respond immediately to your concern. Remember, you have a different perspective than any other parent or the coach and your perspective might not necessarily be the right direction for the coach.
- Do not threaten the coach.
- Do not threaten to pull your son or daughter from the team if things don't go your way. That sends a counter-productive message

Issues Not Appropriate to Discuss with Coaches

- Team strategy
- Team lineups/starters or play of any other player on the team
- Play calling
- Actions of other student athletes, unless such actions are clearly detrimental to your child's safety and well-being, or the safety and well-being of the team as a whole.
- Playing time except as noted above.

Role of Coach and Tools Needed

- Knowing the game
- Knowing the fundamentals of the game Knowing fundamentals of sports psychology in order to treat young athletes appropriately showing affection and genuine concern for the athletes/participants
- Having a sense of humor
- Encouraging improvement and growth rather than emphasizing outcome only
- Encouraging the student/athletes to perform their best, just as we would urge them on with their class work, knowing that others will always turn in better or lesser performances
- Learning, understanding, and respecting the rules of the game
- Teaching the fundamentals of the game
- Respecting the officials and their decisions
- Respecting our opponents and acknowledging their effort to excel
- Developing a sense of dignity under all circumstances
- Providing for a fun and enjoyable experience
- Developing perspective and outlook
- Common goals of coaching include enabling the athletes to have fun, to help the athletes develop skills in football, to help them develop general social, physical, and mental skills using basketball as a tool for learning opportunities, to develop a healthy understanding of winning and losing, and to win. What are your goals and how do you prioritize them?

Duties of Coaches

- Warn about inherent dangers of sport and unsafe procedures/practices
- Instruct in proper techniques and safe procedures/practices
- Supervise the activity and provide for a safe environment
- Maintain safe facilities/equipment
- Plan your instruction; maintain written records of that instruction
- Adhere to proper protocol when disciplining, punishing, or reprimanding a child.
- Know how to respond to an accident, injury, or emergency situation.
- Provide for a safe experience and avoid accidents and liability

Obligations of Coaches to Players

- Give every athlete some individual time with you.
- Encourage the athlete regardless of their individual level of ability. Identify what they can do, not just what they can't do.
- Give each team member a reasonable opportunity to compete. At pre-high school levels, participation must be the primary objective.
- Abstain from foul language.
- Be a top-notch role model; do not use tobacco or drink alcohol (or show evidence of use) in their presence.
- Assist and guide the athlete through their personal problems if they ask.
- Provide a well-structured, safe, and orderly athletic environment
- Recognize the contributions each athlete makes to the team.
- Be firm, fair, and consistent in all discipline.
- Recognize that athletes have the right to a life NOT consumed by the "year round" single sport mentality.
- Do not single out particular players as examples, good OR bad, of what to do or not to do.
- Do not single out, reprimand, or yell at individual players in front of parents, teammates or public. If the player needs to be spoken to for disciplinary reasons or for criticism, do it privately. In situations requiring individual feedback and corrections, give the athlete an honest assessment of the situation, and his/her performance and potential. Answer these questions that the athlete will have:
 - What is the problem or situation? Where/what do I need to improve?
 - What do I need to do to improve? What happens if I don't improve?

Basic Rights of Every Coach

- The right to evaluate talent independently and without pressure from parents or administrators. The coach's judgment of talent represents professional responsibility. Through his/her education, experience, and observation, only the coach is in a position to make these critical judgments.
- The right to determine a strategy. Just as no one tells a dentist how to drill a tooth, no one should dictate a particular strategy for his/her team.
- A right to their own style of motivation as long as it is not abusive, destructive, or detrimental to the well-being of the athlete.
- The right to discipline. How effective the coach is with discipline indicates how much control he/she has over the team.
- The right to be free from outside influences. The ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of an athlete or a team rests on the shoulders of the coach. Outside forces (parents) trying to change a coach's system or influence playing time or strategy can only block the coach from putting into practice what he/she truly believes and puts the coach into a "burnout" position, responsibility without control.