

Script for Redefining "Winner"



Baseball is a great game. It's a lot of fun to play, and it's also a way that we learn important lessons that can help us later in life. I know that I learned a lot from playing competitive sports when I was your age.

I want to tell you about a goal I have for the team and for each of you individually this season. I want each of us to "Act like a winner to be a winner."

There are two kinds of winners. What is one kind of winner? What does "winner" mean to you? (Answer likely to be something like "The one who has the most points at the end of the game.")

One kind of winner is the team that has the most points on the scoreboard at the end of the game. And we want to be that kind of winner. We want to work as hard as we can to win as many games as we can.

There is another kind of winner though that is just as important. That is a winner in life.

We want to learn from this season how to be a winner in everything we do, not just baseball.

To be a winner we need to start acting like a winner. And a winner is someone who is working for mastery of whatever activity he or she is doing. So in baseball we want to work toward mastery to be the best baseball player and team we can be. And we want to learn how to achieve mastery at anything we want to be good at.

To help understand the way that we achieve mastery, we use the example of a tree that we call the Tree of Mastery. If you climb the Tree of Mastery you will be successful.

We say that the Tree of Mastery is an ELM tree because there are three things you need to do to climb the ELM Tree of Mastery:

- 1 **E is for Effort.** We want to give our best effort every time we come out on the field. I am more concerned that we try our hardest than I am if we win. We could win against a weak team without giving it our best effort, and that doesn't really mean anything.

On the other hand we could play a team that was stronger than we are and try our very hardest and lose. I would be proud of us in that case because we were acting like a winner by trying our hardest even though the other team ended up winning the game on the scoreboard.

So the first part of the ELM Tree is E for Effort.

- 2 **L is for Learning.** We want to continue learning and improving every week in practice and every time we play a game. If we continue to learn, we will get better and that is more important than whether or not we are better than some other team.

We could be better than another team without learning and improving if that team is a weak team. And we could be weaker than another team but be learn-

ing a lot and getting better all the time. It's more important to me that we learn and improve than it is to beat a team that isn't very good. And it's more important that we learn and improve even if we lose to a team that is stronger than we are.

So the second part of the ELM Tree is L for Learning.

- 3 **M is for how we respond to Mistakes.** Most people think it's bad to make a mistake. But mistakes are part of the learning process. You can't learn something as complicated as baseball if you are afraid to make a mistake. And people that are afraid to make a mistake often don't even try very hard.

I want you to know that it is okay to make a mistake on this team. We want to learn from our mistakes and not let them discourage us or keep us from working hard.

So, is it okay to make a mistake on this team? Yes, it is. And the third part of the ELM Tree is M for how we respond to a Mistake.

Acting like a winner involves three things. It means

- *Giving your best effort every time*
- *Continuing to learn and improve, and*
- *Not letting mistakes (or fear of making a mistake) stop you.*

If you do these three things, you are acting like a winner, and you will be a winner in life as well as baseball. Now let's have a great practice. Give it your best effort, learn as much as you can, and don't worry about making a mistake.

> Oh, before we go, what kind of a tree is the Tree of Mastery?

> What does each letter stand for?

ELM Tree Talking Points



- The Tree of Mastery is an ELM Tree. ELM stands for **E** for Effort, **L** for Learning, **M** for bouncing back from Mistakes
- Research shows athletes who focus on ELM improve faster and do better on the scoreboard. To be our best we should focus on ELM.
- If you give your best effort every time, I'll be proud of you no matter what the score is.
- Learning requires having a Teachable Spirit. Let's try to learn something to get better every practice and every game.
- The best players don't throw a tantrum when they make a mistake, they reset on the next play and then later they try to learn from their mistake.
- I want you to play with enthusiasm and be aggressive. It's okay to make a mistake – the key is to bounce back quickly from it so you can make the next play. We'll learn a mistake ritual we can use to recover quickly from mistakes.

You might reinforce the L in ELM by giving your players a "homework" assignment to watch their sport at the college or professional level on TV and write down at least one thing they learned that they could try in their own practice.

Flush & Park Mistakes with a Mistake Ritual



Once a player makes a mistake in public (and the playing field, even with only a few spectators present, is a very public venue for youth athletes), they are no longer in the moment. Their negative self-talk kicks in and they begin to berate themselves silently for making a mistake. They are usually not ready to make the next play.

A mistake ritual is a gesture and statement that individuals use to ward off the fear of making mistakes so they don't play timidly. A mistake ritual allows athletes to quickly "reset" and get ready for the next play or decision without wallowing in the past and beating themselves up for having made a mistake.

There are many mistake rituals, but here are some that we especially like. One is "Flushing Mistakes." When your athlete makes a mistake on the playing field, you can simply put your hand above your shoulder and make a motion like you are flushing a toilet. You can add commentary to the flush: "It's okay, Omar. Flush it. Next play."

Another mistake ritual is "No Sweat." This involves swiping two fingers across one's forehead like you were flicking sweat from your brow. Do this with your athlete after a mistake and add, "No sweat. Forget it and get ready for the next play!" Or you can yell "brush it off" while using a hand motion of brushing something off your shoulder.

The power of a Mistake Ritual is well documented. The "flush" played a major role in Louisiana State University's successful quest for the 2009 NCAA baseball title.

- Ryan Schimpf after hitting a homerun in the Super Regional to beat Rice:
"I had two terrible at-bats previously and I just tried to flush it."
- Pitcher Anthony Ranaudo after a bad outing against Virginia: "I just have to be able to flush it mentally and go out there with a new attitude and approach." He then allowed only 4 hits in 6 shutout innings to defeat Arkansas in the College World Series.
- LSU Head Coach Paul Mainieri after losing to Texas in the finals:
"This just wasn't our night. We have to flush this loss and come out ready to play for the national championship on Wednesday night" (which they won). And the pitcher who picked up the win in the final game? Frequent flusher Anthony Ranaudo.

Cal State Fullerton also used a mistake ritual to turn around a dismal season in which they were 15-16 midway through the season to help them win the 2004 NCAA baseball title. Evan Longoria and other hitters on the Tampa Bay Rays rely on the flush to help them improve their batting. And the 2000 USA Olympic Softball Team not only flushed their bad games, they all got in the shower with their uniforms on to wash away the mistakes after their third loss in a row. With their backs to the wall, they won five straight games to win the Gold Medal in Sydney.

Baseball and softball lend themselves especially well to mistake rituals, but the tool works in any sport. A hockey goalie once told me that after every goal scored against him he pictures the goal, decides whether he was out of position or if there was anything he could have done to stop the puck, then bangs his stick against the metal bar of the goal to focus on the next play.

Flush & Park Mistakes with a Mistake Ritual *continued*

A mistake ritual may be the most powerful tool you as a Double-Goal Coach have because mistakes are what youth athletes worry about most. If you reduce fear of making mistakes, more energy will be available to learn and excel at the game.

Parking Mistakes: Many coaches have problems telling players it's okay to make a mistake because it seems like a violation of good teaching. When a player makes a mistake, it is the coach's responsibility to correct it. This is where the idea of a Parking Lot comes in.

When a player makes a mistake in a game you want to remember it so you can prepare the player for a better outcome next time. But in a game the moment after a mistake is not a teachable moment for most youth athletes.

At that moment, the most important thing a Double-Goal Coach can do is to help a player continue competing, which is what a mistake ritual does. You make a note of the mistake without saying anything about it at the time, and "park" it where you will remember it after the game so you can address it in practice.

When you think about the mistake later, you can try to understand why the athlete made the mistake. It could be he was never adequately taught it. Perhaps it was taught, but she didn't understand what you asked her to do. Maybe the skill is a complex one and he hasn't mastered it physically although he understands what you want him to do.

Often, a player can perform an action until fatigue sets in which can open the floodgates for mistakes late in competitions. Sometimes nervousness causes a player to muff something she can do easily in practice. Rarely does a player understand what you have asked him to do and choose to intentionally disregard your wishes, although this may happen once in a blue moon.

If you think about the various reasons mistakes happen, a mistake ritual helps your players perform better in a game no matter why they made the mistake.

Talk with your team about the importance of not being afraid of mistakes, discuss what mistake ritual they would like to use. Then encourage your players to use the ritual in competition. This is a powerful concept with lifetime implications. And it will help your team be more successful on the scoreboard!

Using Effort Goals



Effort Goals are a powerful tool of the Double-Goal Coach. Most coaches set Outcome Goals, which are highly dependent on the quality of one's opponent. A beginner playing tennis against a professional player is not likely to achieve the Outcome Goal of winning the match regardless of how hard he tries which can be discouraging. Effort Goals are largely under one's control regardless of the competition. A beginner playing an experienced player may lose on the scoreboard but still has a chance to achieve his Effort Goal.

If players are recognized for trying hard, they will be likely to continue. Getting players to understand what it means to try hard can help them throughout their life. Effort goals are motivating to all players because they can control them and they can see their progress.

EFFORT vs. OUTCOME GOALS

Effort and Outcome Goals are often confused. Here are some examples.

	EFFORT GOAL	OUTCOME GOAL
<i>Baseball/ Softball</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Run hard through first base on a grounder	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beat the throw to first base
<i>Basketball</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make contact with opponent to block out after shot	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get the rebound
<i>Lacrosse</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sprint after ground balls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gain possession of the ball
<i>Soccer</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sprint after balls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get to the ball first and control it

The Link Between EFFORT GOALS and OUTCOME GOALS

Outcome Goals can discourage effort, especially for younger, beginning or outmatched athletes. It's not that coaches should pay no attention to Outcome Goals because there is a definite connection between Effort and Outcome Goals. Well-designed Effort Goals should, over time, move one toward Outcome Goals. If a team focuses on Effort Goals and begins to achieve them, its performance will improve and, over time, it will begin to get the Outcome Goals it desires (again, depending on relative talent).

For example, if a basketball coach wants her team to work hard at driving to the basket, together they can set an Effort Goal of shooting at least 20 free throws per game. Taking the ball aggressively to the basket will often lead the other team to foul, giving her team free throws. If the team achieves its Effort Goal of 20 free throws in the game, it is much more likely to also achieve its Outcome Goal of winning the game.

Using Effort Goals *continued*

Setting Effort Goals

Effort Goals can be set by the coach, but it is more powerful to involve players in setting their own. Initially, players may not understand the difference between an Effort Goal and an Outcome Goal so coaches need to stress that Effort Goals are 1) about how hard one tries, and 2) under the control of the player. A coach can "seed" the discussion by throwing out some possible Effort Goals. Then players can be asked to select Effort Goals they'd like to achieve.

The ideal situation is for players to set their own Effort Goals and attach a number to them for each practice, game or season. For example, "I will sprint after out-of-bounds shots" is less effective than "I will sprint after at least 5 out-of-bounds shots in the game." The coach can then review the game with the player and they can set an Effort Goal for the next game based on how well he did in this one.

Game and Season-Long Effort

Effort Goals can keep teams trying throughout a game or season regardless of the score. As long as a team has a chance to achieve its Effort Goals, it will be more likely to play hard all game long. At halftime or during time-outs, coaches can review progress toward Effort Goals.

In the example above, the basketball coach can review the team's progress toward its Effort Goal of 20 free throws at halftime. Having a goal of 20 free throws and realizing they have only gotten four can motivate the team to be more aggressive in the second half.

Wayne Pinegar once coached a soccer team of 7- and 8-year-old girls that had a challenging season. In the opening minutes of the first game his team scored a goal. That not only was the team's only goal that season, it was its only shot on goal.

Wayne developed a set of Effort Goals to keep the team from getting discouraged because they had virtually no chance of winning on the scoreboard. One of the goals was to move the ball across midfield at least five times in a game.

Toward the end of the final game of the season, with his team way behind, the girls moved the ball past midfield and they, and their parents on the sidelines, went nuts. Their celebration caused the opposing team and parents some confusion – weren't they winning? Why was this other team, which was getting trounced according to the scoreboard, celebrating so enthusiastically? The answer, of course, is that when a coach develops Effort Goals, the players can feel good about their improvement and continue giving their best effort even when they lose by a big margin on the Scoreboard.

Effort Goals for Talented Athletes and Teams

Effort Goals are not just for out-matched athletes or teams. Effort Goals can be useful for a talented team when it is playing an over-matched team and winning easily on the scoreboard. If a team has put the game away early, the coach can have players focus on Effort Goals using their weak hand or foot or trying a new move that they have not yet been able to master in a game. Using Effort Goals in this way has another benefit – it tends to keep the more talented team from rolling up the score even further.

Share Your Effort Goal Experience with PCA

Let us know your experience with Effort Goals. E-mail us at pca@positivecoach.org.

This is adapted from *The Double-Goal Coach* by Jim Thompson.

The Just-Right Challenge



The very best Stretch Goal is what we call the Just-Right Challenge. When kids are working at just the right level of challenge, it's fun.

Read the research from Dr. Deborah Stipek, Dean of the Stanford School of Education, in her book *Motivated Minds*.

A group of children were given a pre-test on their skill level with respect to 13 different puzzles. Then the children were left alone and told they could play with any puzzle.

Children who started working on puzzles that were too easy had bored looks on their faces. When they got to the "just-right puzzle," they started to smile! All the children ended up picking the puzzle that was just one level higher than their proficiency level. Dr. Stipek calls this the "Just-Right Challenge."

Script for Filling the Emotional Tank



Have you ever heard of the home court advantage? How often do you think a team wins on its home court? It turns out that teams win at home a lot more than when they are away. One reason for this is the emotional support of the crowd. It tends to lift our emotions and make us play better.

We want to be able to play our best all of the time. To play our best we have to keep our "Emotional Tanks" full. What is an Emotional Tank? Well, it is like a gas tank in a car. When it is full, we run well, but when it is empty, we can't go very far.

Why is it important that we keep each other's tanks full? If our Emotional Tank is empty, we become negative, and we give up easier. If our tanks are full, however, we are optimistic and are able to handle difficult situations. As the coach, I will do my best to help fill your Emotional Tanks. To have a really great season, I need your help.

Think about when you miss a free throw. What would someone say to make you feel worse? ("Nice job (sarcastically)," "You stink!") See, that was easy. We call that draining the Emotional Tank. When you criticize or insult your teammates, you make them feel worse. That's why we call it draining the Emotional Tank. I will try not to drain your Emotional Tank, but sometimes I will have to correct you to help you learn the game. I will try to do this in a way that keeps your Emotional Tank full.

What would someone say to make you feel better after you missed a shot. ("Get the next one," "Shake it off!") We call that filling the Emotional Tank. Here are some ways to fill the Emotional Tank:

- Tell your teammate when you see him do something well, or when you see him giving his maximum effort, even if he does not make the play,
- Tell him when you see him improving – This will make him want to continue trying hard to improve even more,
- Listen to your teammates – If your teammate has an idea he wants to share, you can fill his tank by listening to what he has to say. No one wants to be ignored.

I promise to do all of these things. Also, I want you to do tank-filling activities with each other.

Here is a great way that you can help me. It is called the Buddy System. Once in a while at practice, I'll ask you to pair up with a buddy. It might be a different buddy every time. I want you to look for the things that your buddy is doing well. Remember, though, you have to be truthful, or else it won't mean anything. Also, try to tell your buddies exactly what they did right. If your buddy makes a nice pass, say "Good pass! Way to bounce it in to the low post."

Do you think it is important to say more positives than negatives? How many more positives should you say? I am going to try to shoot for five positives for every negative. I don't want you to worry about the exact number of positives you say, just remember, be as positive as you can.

So, right now, pair up with someone else, and he will be your buddy for today's practice. Later in the practice, I am going to have each one of you report back to the team on what your buddy said to you to fill your tank.

This season is going to be an especially great season if we support each other and keep our Emotional Tanks full. With full Emotional Tanks, we will be off to the races, and there is no limit to what we can accomplish.

> Now, who can tell me some ways to fill each other's Emotional Tanks?

Emotional Tank Talking Points



Jot down some simple talking points to use with your players at the first practice and then come back to them regularly.

For example

- We all have Emotional Tanks
- E-Tank like gas tank in car; to go far you need a full tank
- People perform better with full E-Tanks so let's learn to fill each other's tanks
- Many people find it easier to drain E-Tanks than fill them, but we want to be different
- Thanking people and noticing when they do well fills E-Tanks
- Helping your teammates bounce back from a mistake also fills E-Tanks
- Tank filling can be non-verbal – high fives, fist-bumps, pats on the back, eye contact and smiles all fill E-Tanks.
- The first few times you try to fill someone's E-Tank, it may feel uncomfortable, but stick with it and you'll get comfortable
- As coaches we're going to fill your Tanks as much as we can to help you do well but each of us becomes a tank filler, we'll have more fun and be a better team

Positive Charting

Positive Charting is simple – but not necessarily easy. It requires effort, the effort to observe. As Yogi Berra is reported to have said, “It’s amazing what you can see if you look.”

As coaches we tend to think that we add value by finding things that are done incorrectly and improving them. But it is equally important to find things that are being done correctly to reinforce them so players will continue them. Positive Charting is a method for increasing the number of “right things” that your players do. It also creates a wonderful positive atmosphere in which players are more receptive to being corrected because they feel appreciated.

Here’s how Positive Charting works:

- 1 Write the name of each player in a box on the Positive Charting Form. If there is a specific action you want to look for with that player (for example, hustling back on defense, blocking out for rebounds) write it in the space marked “Look-For.”
- 2 Look for the positive things players do. Whenever you see one, jot a note under the player’s name (over time you’ll develop your own shorthand. The key is to write enough so you’ll remember it when you get to step #6 below.) Remember to look for team-building things that players do to encourage each other as well as their physical actions.
- 3 Include assistant coaches, parents, and players who are sitting on the bench in the Positive Charting process. It will help them see the game in a new way.
- 4 Ensure you have about the same number of comments (2-5 is good) for each player. You may have to look hard with some players. Limit the number of comments for the advanced players. Be disciplined: at the end of the game you should have 2-5 items for each player.
- 5 Be honest. Don’t write something that is not true. This is the hard part – you have to find something positive about each player. You can do it if you look hard enough.
- 6 Begin your next practice with a quick team meeting by reviewing your Positive Charting with the team. Take 30 seconds for each player in turn and share the positive with the group.
- 7 Enjoy the positive energy of your players during practice.

An example of the power of Positive Charting from a coach in Ohio (JohnC58) posted on Amazon.com as a review of *Positive Coaching: Building Character and Self-Esteem Through Sports* by PCA founder Jim Thompson:

“...I coached a group of 13-14 year old softball players the year that I purchased this book. At the beginning of the season, the only team these girls could beat was themselves; in fact primarily the reason they were losing was the fact that they were beating themselves! Well, after one mediocre game, I sat the girls down on the bench and instead of reading them the riot act, I took to heart a suggestion by the author. I mentioned all the positive aspects of the game they played just to show these girls that they were capable of doing some positive things.

I did this after each game from then on, win or lose. Wouldn’t you know it, these same rag tag girls lost the last game of the season: the city championship game by one run (to a team that annihilated them by 12 runs in the first game of that season.) This an example of positive coaching, and I’ve used everything in this book to my advantage to become a successful POSITIVE coach. Thanks Mr. Thompson for turning my career around!”

Positive Charting is such a powerful tool it can seem like magic. Try it. You won’t regret it.

Coaching Your Own Child

An excerpt from "The Power of Double-Goal Coaching" by Jim Thompson



Historically, young people have apprenticed with their parents' business. Today there is little opportunity for this but coaching your own child can be a wonderful experience in working together. Many parents and children look back on their times together on a sports team as some of the best moments of their lives. Here are some tips for making that shared experience a positive one.

- Ask your child. "How would you feel about me coaching your team this season?" If he has reservations, it's good to know that upfront, and if they are strong ones, you may want to choose to be a supportive sports parent this season.
- Things get complicated coaching your child. You wear two hats, as parent and as coach. Explain to your child that you need to treat her like everyone else on the team when you wear your coach's hat. But when you put your parent hat on, she is the most important person in your life (along with other family members).

Some coaches have a special cap they wear only when coaching their child's team. After a game or practice, they make a point of changing hats: "I'm taking my coach hat off and putting my dad hat on."

- Be sensitive to favoring or penalizing your child. Many coaches give their child advantages (like starting games or playing favored positions) the child hasn't "earned" by effort or talent. Few things poison the well with other parents and players like a coach unfairly favoring his own child.

However, many coaches are harder on their own child. We can't be objective about our own child so you may find it useful to ask another person (perhaps an assistant coach) to let you know if you are treating your own child fairly compared to other players on your team.

- If you have an assistant coach, you might find it useful to regularly have him or her give instruction and feedback to your child while you return the favor.
- Don't talk about other players on the team with your child. This places him in a complicated situation and may color his relationships with other players. He is a member of the team, not your co-coach.
- Avoid sports overload with your child. Make sure to do other family activities unrelated to sports during the season. If doing sports at home, focus on having fun rather than on drills designed to make your child better. This way she will be fresh for practice rather than feeling she gets no respite from sports.
- PCA tools like Kid-Friendly Criticism, Asking Permission, If-Then Statements, etc. are especially helpful to parent-coaches because they enable athletes to hear and embrace criticism rather than become defensive.

Your time coaching your child will pass by very quickly. Whatever happens, I encourage you to stay in the moment and enjoy this special time.



Script for Honoring the Game

About Positive Coaching Scripts

PCA has developed Positive Coaching Scripts to help coaches introduce positive coaching principles to their teams.

Scripts shouldn't be memorized and recited word-for-word. Read through the script and then put the ideas into your own language, words you feel comfortable using when you talk to your team.

Positive Coaching Script for Honoring the Game

I love the game of soccer, and I hope you do too. Soccer has a long history and is the most played sport in the world. A lot of great things happen on the soccer field. I feel that it is an honor to be involved in the sport. That's why I want to talk to you about Honoring the Game.

Now, I am sure many of you have had parents or coaches talk to you about sportsmanship, or what it means to be a "good sport." What does it mean to you to be a good sport? (Answers may include "play fair" "don't cheat" etc.) Sportsmanship is important, but in order to get the most out of this soccer season, I want you to honor the game. We say the Honoring the Game goes to the ROOTS of the matter — R-O-O-T-S.

Each letter in ROOTS stands for an important part of soccer that we must respect. The R stands for Rules. The first O is for Opponents. The next O is for Officials. T is for Teammates, and the S is for Self.

R is for Rules The rules of soccer are what allow us to keep the game fair. Respect for the rules is important, even when it's possible to break them without getting caught. I want you to play by the rules, even if you think you won't get caught if you break them. Breaking the rules dishonors the game, even if it means that we win.

O is for Opponents Without opponents, we could have no game. A good opponent makes us do our best. Sometimes your opponents are friends of yours. I want you to respect your opponents, and remember they are out there to have fun just like us. I want you to try your hardest to win, not because you hate your opponent, but because you want to play your best. I promise that I will show respect for opposing coaches and teams, and I expect you to do the same.

O is for Officials It is very important to respect officials. Often, this can be the most difficult part of Honoring the Game, so we need to remember to keep it as a focus when we play. Officials have been selected and trained to enforce rules, and they have a very hard job. Without the officials the game would be unsafe and unfair. Officials are not perfect (just like coaches, athletes and parents!) and sometimes make mistakes. However, there is no excuse for treating officials with disrespect when they make errors. I want you to show respect for officials, even when you disagree with the call. I promise to do the same thing.

T is for Teammates A big part of soccer is the team. Being with your teammates should be fun. Later in life you will often be part of a team, and it is important to learn to work together. I hope you feel a commitment to each other as teammates and that you will agree to always play as hard as you can in practice and games. Please encourage and support each other on and off the playing field.

S is for Self Some people only Honor the Game when their opponents do, but I want us to Honor the Game no matter what the other team or its fans do. I want us to be the kind of team that Honors the Game even when others aren't because we set our own internal standards. And we live up to them no matter what. We have so much respect for ourselves that we would never do anything to dishonor the game.

So what do we mean when we say that Honoring the Game goes to the ROOTS of the matter?

Respect for:	Rules	Opponents	Officials	Teammates	Self
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If you do these five things, you are Honoring the Game. You and your teammates will get the most out of our season, and you will join the great tradition that is soccer. Now let's Honor the Game starting right now at this practice, especially when we scrimmage.

> Who can give me an example of how we Honor the Game of soccer?

> What does each letter stand for?

Honor the Game Talking Points



Jot down some talking points to use with your players at an early practice and then return to them throughout the season. For example,

- I want us to Honor the Game so we can be proud of ourselves win or lose
- The acronym ROOTS will help us remember what we need to do.
- **R** – We obey the Rules even if we can get away with bending them, and even if our opponents don't.
- **O** – A worthy opponent helps us get better – we want to play fierce and friendly and never think of them as enemies.
- **O** – We respect Officials even when bad calls go against us. I don't want you to speak to officials during a game even if you are being treated unfairly, okay?
- **T** – We don't do anything to embarrass our teammates, on or off the field.
- **S** for Self – Don't Honor the Game because I tell you to. Do it because you want to. We live up to our own standards even if our opponent doesn't.
- Later in the season ask, "Who remembers what the R stands for? The O?" etc.



Role of the Culture Keeper

Many PCA partner organizations and coaches appoint official "Culture Keepers" to help reinforce Honoring the Game as a paramount value in their organizations and teams. However, any parent can serve as an unofficial Culture Keeper. This document describes the role of a Culture Keeper.

A **Culture Keeper** helps shape the culture of a youth sports team and/or organization. Culture is simply "the way we do things here." The bedrock of a positive youth sports culture is Honoring the Game.

A **Positive Youth Sports Culture** involves not only the coaches and athletes, but also parents and fans. That's where you come in. The Culture Keeper's job is to spread the word about Positive Coaching to parents and fans on the sidelines. Here's how:

- > Become familiar with the three principles of Positive Coaching (*Honoring the Game*, *Redefining Winner*, and *Filling the Emotional Tank*). Read PCA material, check out the PCA web site (www.positivecoach.org) for more information. Ask the coach about anything you don't understand. In particular, memorize the elements of Honoring the Game (ROOTS) which include respect for

Rules
Opponents
Officials
Teammates
Self

- > Get to know other parents on the team at the beginning of the season. Talk with them about your role early on and ask for their support on the sidelines during games. Make sure they have seen the PCA Parent Letter and ask if they have any questions about it. If they haven't, give them a copy.
- > Model the Behavior You Want to See. Parents pick up on each other's behavior. If you harp at officials, other will be more likely to do the same. If you are calm and focused, it will be easier for them to act like you.
- > As the season progresses, continue to keep the idea of Honoring the Game alive with all the parents.
- > Welcome new families to the program and let them know up front "How we do things here."
- > Give occasional pre-game talks to the fans on the sidelines. Remind everyone to "Honor the Game", support all the athletes and to have FUN!
- > Be visible on the sidelines. Wear an "Honor the game" button to games and carry Honoring the Game cards and stickers with you to give to parents (Available from PCA's on-line store at www.positivecoach.org or call toll free 866-725-0024). Take the lead and demonstrate to others how to Honor the Game. Acknowledge those participants "doing it right." People tend to do what gets rewarded – so thank those who Honor the Game.

APPENDIX

In spite of your work to help establish a Positive Coaching culture on the sidelines for your league or team, parents will occasionally step over the line because none of us is totally rational about our own children.

If parents get upset about calls made by officials or act in any way that doesn't Honor the Game, you can help reinforce a Positive Coaching culture by how you interact with them. Here are some guidelines for intervening with other parents on your team who dishonor the game (Note: we don't recommend that you intervene with parents from the opposing team as this can quickly lead to an escalation which is the opposite of what you are trying to do as Culture Keeper).

- Step 1** **NON-VERBAL APPROACH:** When an adult first misbehaves, hand him an Honoring the Game card or sticker. Nothing need be said at this point. You simply hand a card or sticker to the person. Many times this is all that is needed.
- Step 2** **GENTLE APPROACH:** Sometimes a non-verbal approach doesn't do the job. Then address the misbehaving adult in a gentle way. You might say, "You seem pretty upset." This will often get them talking to you rather than screaming at the official. You can then remind them that we respect the official even if we disagree with a call. Continuing in a gentle vein: "You may be right about that call being incorrect, but in this organization/on this team, we Honor the Game and show respect to officials even if they are wrong."
- Step 3** **CALM AND ASSERTIVE APPROACH:** Sometimes a person will not respond to gentle interventions. In these cases you need to be clear about how you feel about this person's bad behavior and what is expected. Yet stay calm. To paraphrase Rudyard Kipling: If you can keep your head while all around you others are losing theirs...you'll get better results. Getting upset at parents who are already upset may only add fuel to the fire. Be firm but calm. And if you can't be calm, then be as calm as you can be.

Here are some things you can say if Step 1 and 2 haven't worked.

"Remember we want to set a good example for our kids and Honor the Game."

"That's not the way we do things here in this organization/on this team!"

"Yelling at the official is not Honoring the Game."

"It's not okay to act like that here."

"That kind of behavior has no place here."

Stand back from the person so that you don't threaten them by invading their personal space. You want to let them know their behavior is not acceptable, but not escalate this into something even worse. Do not put yourself at physical risk. If the person becomes abusive or continues to act inappropriately, do not retaliate physically or verbally. Simply withdraw and contact an official (either a board member or administrator of the organization, or the on-field referee) and tell him or her what is happening so appropriate action can be taken.

Final Word Don't forget to enjoy the season. It's going to be a great one.



Intervening on the Sidelines

An Honoring-the-Game Plan for Coaches

Prevention is the best cure. Coaches who create a team culture based on Honoring the Game likely will have fewer problems with parents and fans on the sidelines. But some parents and fans will inevitably misbehave when things go against their team or child. When that happens, coaches have the responsibility to intervene, to defend the positive sports culture we want for our children. Some suggestions:

Cue parents before games Take time to remind parents before the game to Honor the Game.

"Today's game is important for us, and we want to play our best. I want to remind you to Honor the Game today. I expect everyone associated with our team to act to make us proud of each other. If there is a bad call by the official, I want you to be silent. If there is a problem with the officiating, it's my job to address it, not yours. Your job is to fill the Emotional Tanks of our players and be a good role model for our kids. Everyone understand? Okay. Thanks."

Introduce Officials to Parent If the situation allows, ask the officials if you can introduce them to your parents.

"These are the officials for today's game. This is John Jordan and Heather Harris. They'll be making the calls today, and I know we all want to show them the respect they deserve. Let's give them a hand for being willing to do a tough job." (Lead clapping.)

Check in with Culture-Keeper If you haven't already recruited a parent as "Culture-Keeper" to be your ally and promote sideline behavior that Honors the Game, do so as soon as you can. Always check in with your culture-keeper before a game.

"Thanks for serving as the team's culture-keeper. I want everyone to Honor the Game today. Make sure to touch base with each parent early in the game. Say hello and feel free to remind them that we want to set an example for our kids to Honor the Game. Are you all set? Do you have any questions? Thanks again!"

Model the Behavior You Want to See Parents pick up on your behavior. If you harp at officials, they'll be more likely to do the same. If you are calm and focused, it will be easier for them to act like you.

Anticipate When an official makes a "bad" call that favors your team, your parents are not likely to misbehave. If you think about it, you can usually anticipate situations in which parents are likely to become upset. For example,

- If a game determines which team goes on in the playoffs, expect parents to be more likely to lose control than in an early season game. You might even invite a board member or administrator to attend the game as a precaution.
- A close game is more likely to see misbehavior than a game decided early.
- A call against your team at the end of a game is more likely to attract jeers than one early in the game.
- If there is a perception that the other team is playing rough and the officials are not calling penalties, this is a combustible situation.

The bottom line: If a call upsets you, you can expect your parents to also be unhappy about it. That is a sign to monitor what's going on with your parents and fans on the sideline.

Nip Problems in the Bud The earlier you can respond to bad sideline behavior, the less likely it is to get out of control. Think of a match dropped in a dry forest. It's relatively easy to put out the fire when the match first drops. But a short time later, when the blaze has gotten going, it can be very difficult to put out.

At the first example of sideline misbehavior, even if it's reasonably mild, let your parents know that it's not okay.

"Okay, cool it now. I don't want you to do anything that will distract or embarrass our players. I want you to Honor the Game"

Sometimes just a look and a downward hand movement to "calm down" will do the job!