



BETTER ATHLETES  
BETTER PEOPLE

# Life Lessons From the Playing Field

*By Jim Thompson, Founder and CEO, Positive Coaching Alliance*

- 1 The “Little Picture” of the immediate success or failure of our children’s performance in youth sports obscures the vitally important “Big Picture” of the lessons they will learn from sports that will serve them throughout their lives.
- 2 Leadership is the release of energy, not telling people what to do. The best coaches get the most out of their players by getting them excited about how good they could be.
- 3 It’s crucial to get the mental model right! The prevailing “win-at-all-cost” model needs to be banished in favor of the Double-Goal Coach® who wants to win and use sports to teach life lessons.
- 4 Culture determines behavior. Although we like to see ourselves as independent actors, people are pack animals. We tend to conform to the expectations of the “teams” we want to be part of. It is essential to be explicit about norms for behavior in your sports program.
- 5 Fearing mistakes is worse than making them. It needs to be okay for kids to make mistakes in sports to unlock the potential for truly inspired performance.
- 6 People with full “Emotional Tanks” can surprise even themselves. So fill them!
- 7 Effort and enjoyment are entwined. There is no better place than sports to teach kids that hard work is fun.
- 8 Is there trickle-up potential for youth sports? Can kids learn lessons in sports that will make them more ethical adults? Yes.
- 9 Kids love to talk about sports so much they’ll even talk to their parents about it!
- 10 The game is short – enjoy the game. Your child’s experience with sports will end abruptly and when it does, you will wish you had not been so obsessed with how well your child did. You’ll wish you had fretted less and enjoyed it more.

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