

**The Super Liga Newsletter is proudly designed and distributed by Giovanni Pacini, *your* Super Liga Director of Coaching Education.**

**The Super Liga Newsletter is designed to keep you up to date with all that’s happening in the world of coaching and player development! Enjoy!**

**THE SUPER LIGA NEWSLETTER #7**

**From the “Liberty Mutual Insurance Shine a Light on the Need for Parents to Lead in Sportsmanship” Discussion (June, 2014)**

With spring sports seasons in full swing and summer sports camps on the near horizon, a new national survey of 2,000 youth sports parents and coaches by [Liberty Mutual Insurance](http://www.libertymutual.com/) illuminates a troubling decline in what some would say is the most important lesson of youth sports: sportsmanship.  The results generated new resources and information available to help address this important issue head on.

The survey reveals that sportsmanship is considered among the most important lessons taught by youth sports.  Regrettably, approximately 50 percent of parents and coaches believe that sportsmanship has worsened in youth sports since they participated as children, while only 12 percent feel it has improved.  Yet, survey results suggest it may be their own behaviors that are contributing to this perception:

* 60 percent of respondents reported either witnessing or participating in negative or abusive sideline behavior
* 26 percent of parents said they have witnessed a verbally abusive coach
* 16 percent of parents said they have witnessed a physical confrontation between parents
* 55 percent of coaches have experienced parents yelling negatively at officials or their own kids, and two in five have experienced parents yelling negatively at other kids

Further, 75 percent of parents and coaches say that teaching sportsmanship is the responsibility of parents.  With 80 percent of parents responding to the survey claiming to play an active role in their child’s youth sports experience, the challenge isn’t parental involvement; it’s taking the time to instill the value of sportsmanship in their children.

“Growing up as a youth athlete, my coaches and parents were constantly using examples of poor behavior on the field as an opportunity to teach me about the importance of sportsmanship,” said actor Chris O’Donnell, a father of five and the Liberty Mutual Insurance Responsible Sports Ambassador.  “Those lessons have stuck with me over the years, and now as a father of children involved in youth sports, I know the opportunity lies with us as parents to have the conversation and reinforce this important life lesson.”

Liberty Mutual Responsible Sports provides just the types of resources that parents need to have a meaningful discussion with their children about sportsmanship and other aspects of the youth sports experience that extend into everyday life:

* **Start with a simple question, “What Is Sportsmanship?"** – focus conversation on abiding by rules and respecting opponents and officials and teammates
* **Explain that sportsmanship doesn’t have an off switch** – reinforce that sportsmanship is important win or lose, even on the practice field
* **Commit to Mom and Dad’s role in sportsmanship** – express that your child’s effort and learning is more important than wins and losses and that leading by example is the best way to exhibit sportsmanship

Other key findings from the Liberty Mutual Insurance Responsible Sports sportsmanship survey include:

**What Matters in Youth Sports** – According to the survey, learning “teamwork” and “sportsmanship” are the two most important aspects of participating in youth sports, according to both parents and coaches. Parents and coaches both also reference the importance of developing skills of the sport as important, but place greater value on the fundamental life lessons that are learned through youth sports participation.

However, while parents acknowledge the importance and value of instilling sportsmanship within their child, not all parents are taking the opportunity to have the conversation.  While 68 percent of parents surveyed indicate that they have discussed good sportsmanship with their child, roughly one third of parents are not having the conversation, despite acknowledging that promoting sportsmanship is there responsibility.

**Wake up Call for Parents and Coaches** – Survey findings indicate that both parents and coaches can be poor role models for youth athletes, and that coaches may not feel empowered to take control of their sideline.

* 40 percent of parents insert themselves into the game by “coaching” their child from the sideline
* While more than half of coaches have experienced parents yelling negatively at officials or their own kids, and two in five have experienced parents yelling negatively at other kids, less than a third of coaches have ever confronted parents about poor behavior

**Role Models in Professional Sports** – The survey also found coaches are more likely than parents feel professional athletes model good sportsmanship.  Nearly nine in 10 coaches cited at least one professional sport they believe athletes demonstrate the most sportsmanship, compared to eight in 10 parents that mention a specific sport as having positive role models.  Similarly, the survey revealed that more parents (20 percent) feel there is not any professional sport that best models sportsmanship than do coaches (10 percent) who feel the same way.

Coaches and parents identified professional golfers and baseball players as the most positive role models for their youth athletes among all professional sports.

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| **WHICH PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES MODEL HIGHEST LEVEL OF SPORTSMANSHIP?** |
| **PARENTS** | **COACHES** |
| ​Golf | ​15% | ​Golf | ​18% |
| ​Baseball | ​15% | ​Baseball | ​17% |
| ​Football | ​7% | ​Soccer | ​9% |
| ​Soccer | ​6% | ​Ice Hockey | ​9% |
| ​Basketball | ​6% | ​Football | ​8% |
| ​Tennis | ​4% | ​Basketball | ​4% |
| ​Ice Hockey | ​4% | ​Tennis | ​3% |
| ​None | ​18% | ​None | ​12% |

“The value of sportsmanship is an essential part of developing youth athletes into responsible adults,” said Anthony Storm, senior vice president and Chief Marketing Officer, Liberty Mutual Personal Insurance. “Through this survey, we have pinpointed that sportsmanship is on the decline and there is a greater need for parents to reinforce this important life lesson.  Our Responsible Sports program provides the resources and tips to properly arm parents for this discussion.”

More results from the survey, as well as the wide range of resources, tools and information that Liberty Mutual Insurance Responsible Sports offers to support youth sports parents and coaches who help children succeed both on and off the field, can be found at ResponsibleSports.com. Parents and coaches can join the conversation by visiting the Responsible Sports Facebook page.

**About the Study**

As a leading resource in youth sports, Liberty Mutual Responsible Sports program commissioned ORC International to conduct a national survey to uncover attitudes and perspectives towards youth sportsmanship in both parents and youth coaches.  2,000 parents and coaches of 7-12 year olds who participate in organized youth sports participated in the survey, resulting in a margin of error +/- 1.99%.

**About Liberty Mutual Insurance Responsible Sports**

Liberty Mutual Responsible Sports is a community-based program providing resources, tools, tips and advice for volunteer youth sport coaches and sport parents.  Powered by Positive Coaching Alliance, the Responsible Sports program offers parents and coaches constructive tips, expert advice and practical examples to help create a positive sports environment for children.  Liberty Mutual also has provided more than $500,000 in grants to youth sports teams, organizations and schools for community participation in the online Responsible Sports curriculum.  Liberty Mutual is proud to support youth sports organizations, including ASA Softball, US Youth Soccer, USA Hockey, U.S. Ski & Snowboard Association, USA Softball, U.S. Speedskating, USA Volleyball, USA Water Polo, and USA Wrestling.  To access the Responsible Sports resources, visit www.ResponsibleSports.com.

**HAVE FUN OUT THERE!**