



“Realizing the Possibilities of Sport”

By Dr. George A. Selleck

EduSports Blue Paper for Schools & Parents

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As I approach my 75th birthday, I am often asked why am I still conducting workshops, making presentations, doing radio and television interviews and traveling more than 12,000 miles a month instead of spending my time out on the golf course as most people my age seem to be doing. I sometimes ask myself the same question.

I think the answer is I feel if I fail to make an effort to share the wonderful things I have learned about how sports can enrich our lives, I will have wasted the opportunity to improve the lives of kids and their families through quality physical activities and sports experiences.

Unfortunately, quality sports experiences are getting harder and harder to come by these days. For example, if your experience with sports has been mostly through televised sports competitions, you may be put-off, as I am, by the increasingly edgy, in-your-face, contentiousness and confrontational nature of today’s sports. Perhaps you seek a more refreshing and satisfying sports experience for yourself and your children—one that highlights caring, consideration, and cooperation.

However, some people argue that because we do live in an edgy, competitive world, our children need to learn how to survive in a winner-takes-all environment. Thus, the more aggressive youth sports are, the better they are.

As I have struggled to respond to this line of argument, I have had to ask myself, “What are sports all about, anyway?” Are they really about determining who is the best? I think not. In my opinion, the major function of physical activity and sport is to renew the human spirit. Sport needs to become a sanctuary from the trials and tribulations of everyday life—an opportunity to take a break from our daily struggles and challenges and enjoy the experience of connecting with others. It never ceases to amaze me how bloodthirsty some sports participants—both athletes and fans—have become, and while I don’t feel I have a right to dictate other people’s tastes, it is my experience that far too often bad things happen to kids, coaches and parents when sports becomes contentious and edgy.

I firmly believe that when parents, teachers, coaches and educators carefully examine the values and opportunities that an expanded, balanced, and carefully thought-

out, physical activities/sports program offers kids, they will conclude that there is a high potential return on their investment in such programs and activities.

As the author or co-author of three books on sports parenting (*Raising a Good Sport in an In-Your-Face World*, *From with Bleachers with Love: Advice to Parents with Kids in Sports*, and *Beyond the Bleachers: The Art of Parenting Today's Athletes*), I am convinced that carefully crafted conversations between parents and kids as well as among teachers, coaches and educators can help kids not just enjoy their time spent chasing a soccer ball or shooting baskets, but also help them gain valuable skills and attitudes that will benefit them throughout their lives. Some of the more important of these include:

- Teaching kids important life lessons about setting goals, being disciplined, working as a team, etc.
- Empowering kids in sport and in other areas of their lives.
- Helping kids develop a broader perspective on sport that allows them to think “outside the box” when it comes to finding ways to enjoy and learn from their sports experiences.

In addition, sport remains a powerful draw for kids and their families and can serve as a community rallying point. Sport provides great opportunities for us to bridge the gap between young and not-so-young, rich and poor, black, brown and white, male and female. Sports’ connective possibilities have been well-documented in film and in print. What we need to do now is expand and improve the reach of physical activity and sport so that it can both counteract the many negative influences in our children’s lives and serve as a way for all of us to become renewed and connected through uplifting sports experiences.

About the Author

George A. Selleck, Ph.D, M.Div, M.A., the director of Sports for Life Education Programs and the cofounder of Parents for Good Sports, is a counseling psychologist with more than 35 years of professional expertise. He has successfully integrated his knowledge of human behavior and his experience as an accomplished athlete and coach to become a national sports workshop specialist and recognized author in the field of sports education. He has presented seminars to hundreds of organizations, including the NBA Rookie Transition Program, the American Basketball Coach's Association, the American Football Coach's Association, Anaheim Unified School District, and more. Dr. Selleck is a former CIF Player of the Year and Stanford All-American, and is a member of the Stanford Basketball Hall of Fame. He was twice named the Los Angeles Times High School Coach of the Year.

Dr. Selleck is on the Advisory board of Edusports.

About EduSports

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