

Kids - What They Want

All kids are different and participate in sports for a variety of reasons. For my oldest son, participation is mainly a social event. He loves being with his friends and having a good time. He's athletic so he's beginning to realize the attention he gets when he has a good game, at bat, or play in the field. My younger son at this point just loves to play. He is in it for the enjoyment he gets while playing. He enjoys hanging out with the kids, but that seems secondary to playing the game.

What about other kids, why do they play? The reasons vary by age and personality. Obviously the high school player is going to have different reasons for playing than a 10 year old. Unfortunately parents and coaches often don't recognize what the kids want to get out of the sport. I believe there are some common themes that apply at all levels:

["Need To Throw Harder?" "3-6 MPH In As Little As 4 Weeks" "Safe For All Ages" - 90mphclub.com](#)

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Fun

Kids don't want to play if it's not fun. Again, we must consider the personality and age of the player. A high school pitcher may think it's fun to practice as hard as he can in order to be successful. The competition is what's fun. For most younger kids the competition isn't as important. They are more interested in the action and excitement of playing. Winning and losing most often means a lot more to the coach and parents than it does to the kids.

Variety and Organization

Many people say that organized sports are boring to the kids. We've organized the fun out. Kids spend too much time standing around and not enough time playing. I disagree that organized sports are boring. It would be nice to still be living in an age when your child could head off to the local sandlot and meet his buddies for a game of baseball. The reality is that parents won't allow it without supervision. It's really the lack of organization within the scheduled practices that cause the problem. When one kid is hitting and the rest of the team is in the field shagging balls, you have taken the fun out of the sport.

Kids want variety and action. They want to develop different skills and they want to run around and have fun. A practice that keeps them moving, playing games, learning, and has a variety of activities, provides an environment that kids will enjoy.

Building Skill

Kids love learning new skills. Just watch the joy of a child making contact for the first time or catching a ball for the first time. As their skill level improves, the challenges must also increase. If they are not challenged they will lose interest.

Friendships

All kids want to be accepted and liked by their peers. Playing on a team gives kids the opportunity to form friendships and interact with other kids in a setting other than school. The team gives the individual child a group identity and a common purpose. It fun sharing the experience with their friends. Many kids will only play because their friends

are playing. That often is the main draw for them to be involved.

Action and Excitement

Everyone remembers shooting that winning shot in the championship game? Remember, the one you hit each time you went out to shoot baskets by yourself when you were a kid. By doing so you took an activity that might be fun and turned it in to something exciting and challenging. Kids seek that excitement in organized sports as well. They want action; they want excitement. It's up to coaches to put them in situations where that desire will be fulfilled.

Attention

Many kids get involved in sports because their parents signed them up. By playing the sport and doing well they receive special attention from their parents and other people close to them. Kids want to please their parents and by performing well they see that their parents are proud of them.

Competition

Competition is listed last for a reason. It's not that kids don't enjoy competing against their peers, many do. Many kids simply don't like the increased pressure of the competition that they feel from coaches and parents. It's that increased pressure that can take away from the enjoyment of the sport. Learning how to deal with competition and disappointment is important. It's also important that coaches and parents realize the desire for competition and the importance of it for the child will develop as their skills do...slowly. Many kids aren't ready to be pushed into highly competitive

situations where they feel the pressure to perform.

Communication

Obviously this isn't a complete list of what kids are looking for when they participate in sports. It is important as a coach and parent that you realize that there are a variety of reasons that kids play. Making sure that your approach matches the desires of the players is essential in providing them with a rewarding season. Finding out what motives your child, and the players on your team, will help you develop a plan for the season that fits in with their desires.

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