



Coaches' Column:

Capitalize on the Coachable Moment

By Larry Lauer, Ph D

Following another tough loss you are hanging out with your team in the locker room. A player jokes to another player that the team's goalie played like sieve. And, in your mind you might tend to agree. The three Five-Hole goals did not boost you or your team's confidence in this young man. The goalie, sitting in the corner of the locker room overhears this comment and looks as if he just lost his best friend. What do you do? Let it slide, they are just kids?

Sport is an environment abounding with opportunities to learn life lessons and life skills such as dealing with adversity in a positive manner and building up teammates. And, these moments come and go every practice, every game. How many opportunities to teach a life lesson did you capitalize on today?

Think about what you learned from the game of hockey - teamwork, leadership, communication, hard work ethic, perseverance, just to name a few. Many people would say that playing the game of hockey allowed you to learn those things. Learning these skills is a natural by-product of participating in the sport. I wish that were the case. Unfortunately, many kids play the game and don't learn these lessons – they continue to give up when facing adversity, show poor sportsmanship, or talk behind teammate's backs.

Hockey does not automatically build character and it does not necessarily reveal it either. It gives players an opportunity to learn these important lessons. Some of us do learn it by chance. But, if we are lucky, we have a coach that instills these important lessons, and trains these important character skills. The coach makes an intentional effort to build character. He or she is the one to step in and teach players that talking badly about the goalie will not help his confidence, will hurt the team, and is not the right thing to do. He or she will also talk to the goalie and attempt to help him learn from the bad game, get over it, and move on.

Coach able moments happen every day. You never know when that time might be when you can impact a player's life so be on the look out!