



Dear Youth Sports Parent,

Welcome to the Richland Youth Association. RYA was introduced many years ago to promote recreational sports in North Richland Hills. Our program goal focuses on the child and their involvement instead of the score.

Through participating in youth sports, your child is winning in social skills, teamwork and physical fitness while having fun. There is a saying, “it takes a village to raise a child.” By working together with the volunteer coaches, league administrators and officials, your child will benefit from all aspects of the program and witness first-hand what being a role model is all about.

Our program goal is to provide a safe, supportive and encouraging environment for kids to enjoy while playing sports. This handbook will provide information about our program, ways for you to become involved and guides for youth sports development.

Teaching and learning is a lifelong task. Your involvement and encouragement for the team will confirm our philosophy.

“You don’t stop playing because you grow old, you grow old because you stop playing.”



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RYA Mission Statement

The mission of RYA is to foster creative lifestyles through sports development and a positive self-image.

RYA Vision Statement Sports Empowerment

Style – Individual expression

Play – Participate in fun activities

Order – Unite as a team

Respect – Honor each other

Teach - How to play the game!

Succeed – Accomplish team goal



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RYA Board Members

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The Reality

- 70% of children drop out of organized sports by age 13.
- 45.3% of young athletes have been called names, yelled at or insulted while participating in sports.
- 17.5 of young athletes say they have been hit, kicked or slapped while participating in sports.
- 21% of young athletes say they were pressured to play with an injury.
- 8.2% of young athletes report that they were pressured to intentionally harm others while playing sports.
- 19,000 member of the National Association of Officials are now offered assault insurance.
- 15% of parents at youth sports events display obnoxious, unruly or unsportsmanlike behavior.***

***National Alliance for Youth Sports



Motivation of Young Athletes

Why do children want to play organized sports?

What are their goals, hopes and aspirations? Each child has his or her own specific answers to these questions. Understanding their reasons for wanting to play sports is a critical first step towards helping children to have the best possible experiences in sport.

Numerous research studies completed in the last 20 years have asked youth sport participants why they decided to participate in organized sports. The top reasons are very consistent. Children expect to have FUN, learn SKILLS, develop FITNESS, and participate because they enjoy COMPETITION. The bottom line is that children want an opportunity to participate in competitive sports, to develop the skills and fitness that will allow them to play effectively, and to have fun doing it.



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The Key to Keeping Kids in Youth Sports

“What’s the use in trying? No matter what I do it’ll never be enough! My coach is never satisfied. My parents are never satisfied. I can’t compete against other kids who are so much better than I am.” From a 9 year old boy who dropped out of organized sports

Research has shown that kids who stay in sports tend to stay in school, get better grades and show better behaviors. It makes sense then, for us to know something about what it takes to motivate kids to keep playing sports once they’ve started.

Don’t expect something from a kid which is not physically or emotionally possible, given the muscle coordination, attention span or level of dedication at a specific age level. The kid then struggles to live up to the expectations of coaches or parents, sees no progress and eventually gives up or quits, feeling like a failure in the eyes of adults.

Help your child to compete against his self, not all the other kids. Start focusing on their personal best

How to be a Good Sports Parent

Encourage your child, regardless of his or her degree of success or level of skill.

Ensure a balance in your student athlete’s life, encouraging privation in multiple sports and activities while placing academics first.

Emphasize enjoyment, development of skills and team play as the cornerstones of your child’s early sports experiences while reserving serious competition for the varsity level.

Leave coaching to the coaches and avoid placing too much pressure on your youngster about playing time and performance.

Be realistic about your child’s ability.

Be there when your child looks to the sidelines for a positive role model.



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Sportsmanship Checklist for Kids

- I abide by the rules of the game.
- I try to avoid arguments.
- I share in the responsibilities of the team.
- I give everyone a chance to play according to the rules.
- I always play fair.
- I follow the directions of the coach.
- I respect the other team's effort.
- I offer encouragement to my teammates.
- I accept the judgment of the game officials.
- I end the game with a positive attitude.

Sportsmanship is the ability to:

Win without gloating

Lose without complaining

Treat your opponent, and the officials with respect.

Sportsmanship Tips:

If you make a mistake don't pout or make excuses. Learn from it and be ready to continue to play.

If a teammate makes a mistake, encourage, don't criticize.

Checklist for Parents – On & Off the Field.

- I maintain a "Fun is No 1" attitude.
- I treat officials, coaches, my kids their teammates and their opponents with respect and avoid ridicule or sarcasm.
- I praise my kids their teammates and opponents just for participating regardless of their athletic skills.
- I remember to look for positives with my kids, their teammates and their opponents.
- I remain calm when my kids or teammates make a mistake and help them learn from them.
- I remind my kids and their teammates not to get down on themselves when things don't go well.
- I try not to take myself too seriously when it comes to my involvement in youth sports, reminding myself that there is life beyond youth sports.
- I remind myself and my kids to laugh and keep a sense of humor.
- I emphasize teamwork in team sports with my kids, teaching them to think "we" instead of me.
- I teach my kids by giving them a good example of good sportsmanship; winning without gloating and losing without complaining



Developing a Positive Relationship with Youth Sport Officials

Coaches and officials never seem to be on the same page. There always seems to be some tension between them. It often seems to coaches that the person officiating must be seeing a different game than they are.

Please remember that Officials are people too!

When you hear the typical comments after the game.....

“It is the ref’s fault we lost the game. If he hadn’t made that call, we would have won the game”

Remember: No matter the sport, there will always be older people on the field to see that the game is played fairly and by the rules.

Our officials are trained and have many years of experience.

They must keep in mind the rules, the age level of each team, and the concept of a fun positive experience for all players in the game.



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11 Commandments for Youth Sports Parents

Richland Youth Association stresses a recreational atmosphere in all of our youth sports programs. As a reminder, here is an article that sums up a recreational attitude for sports. Here are the 11 Commandments for Sport Parents

- 1. Don't act like a jerk in front of your kids:** While in the stands at a game, refrain from behavior that is silly, boorish or abusive. Simple rule: we don't do anything in the stands that we would not do in front of our child in any other place.
- 2. Sports Algebra:** Sports are fun for us and our children in an inverse relation to the importance we put on it. The more serious our attitude toward our children's participation in sports, the less fun it becomes – for us and the kids.
- 3. We know that this is true, but let's act like we know it is true:** Our children will not play professional sports. Our children will not win athletic scholarships to college. Period. Ninety-nine percent of all kids involved at the elementary level just do not have that kind of talent and never will, no matter how hard they work. Enjoy what they can do and forget your own fantasies.
- 4. Know who is playing:** We are not out there on the field. These are our children playing the game, not us. How our children perform in an athletic endeavor has nothing to do with our self-esteem. It is unfair for our children if we feel – and act – as if their athletic performance is somehow a reflection on us.
- 5. Other people's kids are still kids:** Especially when children are young, remember that these are just kids trying to have some fun under difficult circumstances (namely being watched by adults). The other team isn't some collective "enemy" – it is just a bunch of other people's kids in different uniforms. Treat them as kindly as we want our child treated by other adults.
- 6. Put up or shut up:** Leave the coaches alone. Understand that they are usually volunteers who give up a great deal of personal time trying to help our kids. They have a whole group of kids to deal with; they are not professional coaches and they are going to make mistakes. If we don't like the job they do, then we volunteer. The same is true with umpires or referees.



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7. The Exception to Number Six: There are, however, some coaches who watch too many professional coaches on television and decide to emulate them. No coach has the right to treat our children in a disrespectful or abusive manner. We have every right to pull our kids off a team where a coach behaves poorly toward the children. We also have every right to complain to league authorities.

8. Take the pulse regularly: Are our children having fun engaging in organized sports activity? Check regularly. Especially at the elementary level, there is only one reason to have our children involved in athletic activities: because it is fun. If the child is not having fun, there's no reason to continue. Many parents argue that once children join a team, they must stay on at all cost to learn the virtue of commitment. They may have a point. However, too often it's merely an excuse for the ego the parent has tied up in the child's sports activity. And again, particularly at the elementary level, this whole business is supposed to be fun. If it has ceased to be fun for the child, what's the point of continuing?

9. If you don't have something positive to say, don't say it: The last thing our kids need is a detailed rerun after a game of why they struck out. If they did something well, celebrate it. If something bad happened and they want to talk about it, talk about it – but only to build the child up and put things into proper perspective. Our attempts at amateur coaching will probably not do much good, and are usually the absolute last thing that a child wants to hear from us after a rough game.

10. You are supposed to have fun, too: If the "fun" only depends on a win, or on how well our children have performed, then we have got to reexamine our whole attitude. At the end of a game – win or lose – a good time should have been had by both you and your child. If that's not the case most of the time, then something is seriously wrong.

11. Every kid is his or her own kid: Some kids like sports, some don't. Some kids are good at sports, some aren't. And it doesn't depend on whether we liked sports or were good at sports. Every child is a unique gift. We never want to define a kid's worth by the level of skill on a playing field.



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RULES OF CONDUCT FOR ALL YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAMS

PROGRAM PURPOSE

- A. Richland Youth Association strives to provide a fun and safe environment where boys and girls, ages 3-14, can learn the fundamentals of sports, sportsmanship and teamwork under the guidance of volunteer leaders. The league will emphasize participation (everyone plays), physical fitness, building self-esteem, the opportunity to meet new friends, and, above all, fun.
- B. RYA recognizes the various developmental stages of boys and girls. Instruction in the teaching of basic skills will be given by volunteers. Height-adjustable goals are used in the basketball program.
- C. RYA will expose the youth to healthy competition, teamwork, and skill, on their level of physical maturity. Individual success should not be measured by winning or losing.
- D. Youth sports should be a positive learning experience. Too often children are immersed in a highly competitive league before they are prepared to handle it.
- E. We believe for the long-term personal and sports success of our youth, a progressive system is essential. Our leagues allow boys and girls to play at the level best suited to their physical and emotional maturity.

YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS

- Right to participate in sports.
- Right to participate at a level equal with each child's maturity and ability.
- Right to have qualified adult leadership.
- Right to play as a child not as an adult.
- Right to share in the leadership and decision making of their sport participation.
- Right to participate in a safe and healthy environment.
- Right to proper preparation for participation in sports.
- Right to be treated with dignity.
- Right to have fun in sports.

CLASSIFICATION AND ELIGIBILITY

- A. Leagues will be divided by ages. Consideration will be given to the parent's request for a child to be moved up one division to accommodate playing ability, based on the parent's knowledge of their child's ability.
- B. Participants registered by the deadline, will be placed on a team as follows:
 1. Players will be drafted to a team. Special requests will be honored as long as they do not jeopardize the competitiveness of the teams.
 2. The head coach and one assistant coach may have their own children on their team.
 3. When requested, brothers and sisters will be assigned on the same team.
 4. Participants registered after the deadline will be assigned to teams on a space available basis.
 5. Only registered players may participate in games.
 6. Participants play at their own risk. Richland Youth Association does not assume responsibility or liability for accidents and/or injuries which may result from participation in the program.



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THE COACH

- A. The volunteer coach is the critical link to ensuring RYA's success. Coaches will be approved only according to their willingness to adhere to the philosophy and rules of the program. Coaches are strongly encouraged to attend coaches meeting as scheduled.
- B. Coaches should set an example for their players and spectators at all times. They must accept that both correct and incorrect calls are part of the game (especially a youth sports game) and teach players to concentrate on playing the game.
- C. Coaches are to encourage players to be on time for all games and practices, and ready to play.
- D. Coaches and parents should be examples of good sportsmanship to the players.

PARENTS/ SPECTATORS

- A. RYA encourages the positive support of parents and spectators at all youth recreation games. Some points to remember:
 1. Do not take the outcome of the game too seriously. The focus is **kids first**, winning second.
 2. Make positive comments. Criticizing of players, opponents, coaches or officials does not create a positive experience. This type of behavior will not be tolerated.
 3. Accept the official's decisions. The officials strive to contribute positively to our youth sports leagues.
 4. **Verbal abuse, loud or intimidating behavior is prohibited.** Those displaying this behavior will be asked to leave the facility or playing field, and possibly face suspension.
 5. **A parent or approved guardian must be present at all practices and games.** No exceptions will be made.

PRACTICES

- A. Practices will be held at a location designated by the team coach and parents.
 1. Practices times will vary per sport league.
 2. Practices can take place at a school, park or recreation center depending on sport.

PARTICIPATION RULES

- A. It is our goal for **all** players to participate equally during games.
- B. Participation rules apply except for disciplinary action and injury.

EQUIPMENT

- A. If equipment for all sports is provided it will be handed out at the beginning of the season.
- B. Shoes: For Basketball in the gym, players must wear non-marking rubber soled athletic shoes. Proper tread on the shoes ensures traction for the youth while playing.
- C. Team uniforms are NOT provided by RYA in all leagues but are the required uniform for games.
- D. Under no condition may a player wear any equipment that is a danger to other players (The coaches or RYA league director will determine if equipment, such as medical casts, etc. is dangerous.)
- E. All jewelry, including earrings, rings, and necklaces must be removed prior to games or practices.

TEAM ROSTERS

- A. Players are allowed to play on only one team during the season.
- B. The responsibility of moving players from team to team will be at the discretion of RYA. Coaches cannot move/trade players unless approved by the RYA Sport Director.
- C. Should it become necessary to add players to a team, the RYA Sport Director will make the addition.
Coaches cannot add players to their rosters without knowledge or permission of the RYA Sport Director.



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SPORTSMANSHIP

- A. Sportsmanship is major part of this league. It is expected that coaches will exhibit good sportsmanship at all times. It is the coach's responsibility to see that their players, parents, and spectators show proper sportsmanship. **Flagrant fouls or unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated.**
- B. Teams will shake hands with the opponents after every game.
- C. Sportsmanship goals:
 1. Accept the official's decisions. Mistakes will be made...stay focused on the game.
 2. Keep sideline conduct under control and make positive comments.
 3. Cooperate with staff.
 4. Avoid flagrant fouls or unsportsmanlike conduct.
 5. Respect your opponents.
 6. Do not criticize.
 7. No trash talking. Players, coaches, and spectators are to refrain from using harsh, derogatory, or abusive remarks. Trash talkers will be warned one time. If other instances occur, the participant, coach or spectator may be ejected from the game.
 8. Any player, coach or parent/spectator who is, at the discretion of the Coach or RYA Sport Director, deemed out of control will be asked to leave the gym or facility in which the game is being conducted

During practice....

- Skill improvement is important
- FUN is essential
- Allow the coach and player to be creative
- Here is where the game is really learned

In the bleachers.....

- Encourage your son or daughter
- Enjoy the game
- Applaud good plays
- Avoid coaching from the bleacher
- Coaches & Officials are human and make mistakes!

Remember....

- There is more to life than sports
- Encourage fun and Teamwork
- Never second guess a coach
- Never second guess your child
- Listen to them and be supportive