

10 Reasons for Equal Playing Time

On most youth teams, there are players who are physically two or three years ahead of their teammates in size, speed, or strength. These players often form a core of talent that coaches can use to their advantage to win games. Especially in youth travel and select teams, the temptation for many coaches is to use this talent more during a game to go for the win. While this method is appropriate at the highest level of athletic competition, it seldom has any place in youth sports. Here are 10 reasons why equal playing time is a better strategy:

1. **Avoids contention between coaches and parents.** Parents will not objectively judge their own child's abilities. No coach should expect objectivity from parents.
2. **Avoids contention among parents.** The resentments that can build between coaches and parents can often build among parents for the same reasons. More than a few youth teams have had successful seasons poisoned by hard feelings arising out of a coach's game decisions.
3. **Avoids contention among players.** If players feel that coaches have favorites, they may stop trying their hardest.
4. **Minimizes player fatigue.** In tough physical games, coaches will lack skilled players if the top players are exhausted and lesser players have had limited game experience.
5. **Maximizes player development.** Without access to playing time and special situations, players cannot learn.
6. **Simplifies coaching decisions.** Coaches won't have to guess which players are most likely to play well in a given situation.
7. **Recognizes equal investments.** Players and parents often make equal contributions away from the game in time and dollars and thus expect equal access to game situations.
8. **Improves team chemistry.** When players feel everyone is treated fairly, they are more likely to focus on working together. When players feel they can succeed by making someone else look bad or themselves look better, they are learning the wrong lessons about team play.
9. **Wins mean more to everyone.** When everyone contributes to a win, there are no lingering resentments that will interfere with the celebration.
10. **Better reflects coaching abilities.** Winning games with kids who are physically more mature is more a success of drafting than coaching. Winning games by developing all the kids on a team is a better test of a coach's abilities.