



# Post-Game Handshake

*This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.*

**“What’s your view on the post-game handshake and how can coaches and players make it a more sincere gesture?”**

## PCA Response by Ray Lokar, PCA Trainer–Los Angeles

Post-Game Handshakes have come under fire recently due to some confrontations, acts of poor sportsmanship, disrespect, or simply the perceived lack of sincerity in the process. Some organizations and leagues have eliminated the practice.

The potential for conflict is no reason to eliminate handshakes; rather it creates a teachable moment. It takes character to do your best, fall short and congratulate your opponent with dignity and grace – even when you are disappointed and may not feel like it. Youth should learn this important life skill in sports, because it also applies to competition for grades in a class, who wins a talent show, or who gets a job promotion.

The Double-Goal Coach – intent on winning and the even more-important goal of teaching life lessons through sports – should work toward filling the post-game handshake with meaning. Teach players to pay attention to what their opponents do during the game. That will help your own athletes’ performances and give them something specific and truthful for which to praise their opponents in the handshake line. Your players would be honored if opponents treated them that way, so have your players “do unto others...”

If nothing else comes to mind for your players, just have them thank their opponents! Without an opponent, there is no game, and a quality opponent is a special gift. A closely contested game can leave players disappointed, angry, and holding grudges, which makes the handshake difficult. Overcoming those emotions with enough strength to honor your opponent is where true personal growth occurs and life lessons are learned.

So, rather than worry that youth cannot handle that challenge, keep the handshake line alive as an opportunity for youth to learn and grow.

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## Post-Game Handshake, continued

*Ray Lokar has coached a variety of sports for over 25 years at the youth, high school, and college levels, including his son and two daughters who have gone on to play college athletics, as well as an 8-year-old son playing youth sports. Ray was the Head Basketball Coach of the 2002 California Interscholastic Federation Champions while at Bishop Amat High School and is a Past-President of the Southern California Interscholastic Basketball Coaches Association.*

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