

## FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND COACHES IT'S BASEBALL SEASON

As we come closer to our baseball season opening there are several things that come to mind as a father, a coach and as a friend to many. Most of my thoughts are also derived from being a player from the tender age of 5 until most recently as a 36 year old KID playing in the latest World Baseball Classic. My first thought that I believe is and could be one of the most crucial things is understanding the frame of mind that our young kids are in while they are playing. The younger the child the more fragile they are to negative comments and actions from people they view as authoritative figures. I challenge you to picture yourself in front of 42000 people staring at you waiting for you to perform some sort of baseball activity, and even your own job that you consider yourself to be a professional at. It could be pretty nerve wracking and intimidating, and this is what even 10 people could seem like to a little leaguer. The words that you use and the actions that you make while these kids are on the field can dramatically effect them in negative ways. If you are a parent watching, try to use only cheering that promotes the child's confidence. If you are a coach, try to help with there mechanics and approaches to the game but don't forget to point out the things that they do right. It is a good idea to have a little meeting after each practice and game pointing out the mistakes but leave them with the positive accomplishments last so that they are understand what they did right also. And last but not least if you are a friend just innocently watching, try to remember the good things they did and don't just focus on the mistakes made throughout the game.

All the screaming and yelling from the fans can scare, intimidate and make a child dislike the game because it can cause confusion. Allow the coach that is giving his time to your child to coach him. Even if it seems like he or she may not know what they are doing, you have to remember that they are the ones that are donating their time so your son or daughter has a team to play on. Be professional if you feel like you have a legitimate problem with the way the coach is running the team. Make a phone call or a meeting without your child knowing so that they don't feel the pressure from you and the coach having different opinions. Be educated when you approach the idea and try to understand what you are going to be protesting before you question the actions that have been taken. Not every coach knows everything about baseball and together coaches and parents working together can create a better more professional environment for our kids to thrive as athletes and humans. But when the kids see bickering between two adults they might not completely understand what exactly is being disputed and it could cause more confusion and conflict between the athlete and respective party's involved.

The most important things for kids to learn at an early age is good sportsmanship and a how to lose and win with dignity. This has to come from the coaches and parents! The more fun they have on the field, whether it's little challenges for them at practice or letting them play in a game, the more they will learn and the more they will fall in love with America's past time. Good luck this summer and remember to have fun and be conscious of what you say and the actions you take in and around the ball park. The little leaguers are watching!

Sincerely yours  
Stubby Clapp