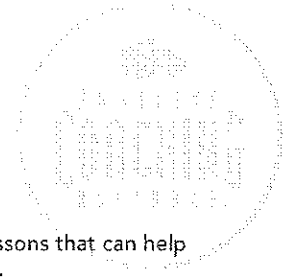


# Script for Redefining "Winner"



Baseball is a great game. It's a lot of fun to play, and it's also a way that we learn important lessons that can help us later in life. I know that I learned a lot from playing competitive sports when I was your age.

I want to tell you about a goal I have for the team and for each of you individually this season. I want each of us to "Act like a winner to be a winner."

There are two kinds of winners. What is one kind of winner? What does "winner" mean to you? (Answer likely to be something like "The one who has the most points at the end of the game.")

One kind of winner is the team that has the most points on the scoreboard at the end of the game. And we want to be that kind of winner. We want to work as hard as we can to win as many games as we can.

There is another kind of winner though that is just as important. That is a winner in life.

We want to learn from this season how to be a winner in everything we do, not just baseball.

To be a winner we need to start acting like a winner. And a winner is someone who is working for mastery of whatever activity he or she is doing. So in baseball we want to work toward mastery to be the best baseball player and team we can be. And we want to learn how to achieve mastery at anything we want to be good at.

To help understand the way that we achieve mastery, we use the example of a tree that we call the Tree of Mastery. If you climb the Tree of Mastery you will be successful.

We say that the Tree of Mastery is an ELM tree because there are three things you need to do to climb the ELM Tree of Mastery:

- 1 **E is for Effort.** We want to give our best effort every time we come out on the field. I am more concerned that we try our hardest than I am if we win. We could win against a weak team without giving it our best effort, and that doesn't really mean anything.

On the other hand we could play a team that was stronger than we are and try our very hardest and lose. I would be proud of us in that case because we were acting like a winner by trying our hardest even though the other team ended up winning the game on the scoreboard.

So the first part of the ELM Tree is E for Effort.

- 2 **L is for Learning.** We want to continue learning and improving every week in practice and every time we play a game. If we continue to learn, we will get better and that is more important than whether or not we are better than some other team.

We could be better than another team without learning and improving if that team is a weak team. And we could be weaker than another team but be learn-

ing a lot and getting better all the time. It's more important to me that we learn and improve than it is to beat a team that isn't very good. And it's more important that we learn and improve even if we lose to a team that is stronger than we are.

So the second part of the ELM Tree is L for Learning.

- 3 **M is for how we respond to Mistakes.** Most people think it's bad to make a mistake. But mistakes are part of the learning process. You can't learn something as complicated as baseball if you are afraid to make a mistake. And people that are afraid to make a mistake often don't even try very hard.

I want you to know that it is okay to make a mistake on this team. We want to learn from our mistakes and not let them discourage us or keep us from working hard.

So, is it okay to make a mistake on this team? Yes, it is. And the third part of the ELM Tree is M for how we respond to a Mistake.

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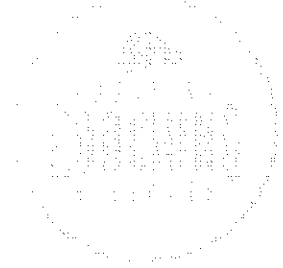
Acting like a winner involves three things. It means

- *Giving your best effort every time*
- *Continuing to learn and improve, and*
- *Not letting mistakes (or fear of making a mistake) stop you.*

If you do these three things, you are acting like a winner, and you will be a winner in life as well as baseball. Now let's have a great practice. Give it your best effort, learn as much as you can, and don't worry about making a mistake.

- > Oh, before we go, what kind of a tree is the Tree of Mastery?
- > What does each letter stand for?

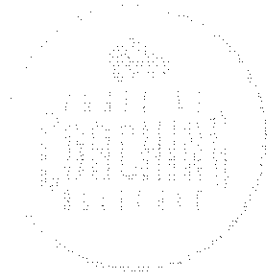
# ELM Tree Talking Points



- The Tree of Mastery is an ELM Tree. ELM stands for **E** for Effort, **L** for Learning, **M** for bouncing back from Mistakes
- Research shows athletes who focus on ELM improve faster and do better on the scoreboard. To be our best we should focus on ELM.
- If you give your best effort every time, I'll be proud of you no matter what the score is.
- Learning requires having a Teachable Spirit. Let's try to learn something to get better every practice and every game.
- The best players don't throw a tantrum when they make a mistake, they reset on the next play and then later they try to learn from their mistake.
- I want you to play with enthusiasm and be aggressive. It's okay to make a mistake – the key is to bounce back quickly from it so you can make the next play. We'll learn a mistake ritual we can use to recover quickly from mistakes.

You might reinforce the L in ELM by giving your players a "homework" assignment to watch their sport at the college or professional level on TV and write down at least one thing they learned that they could try in their own practice.

# Flush & Park Mistakes with a Mistake Ritual



Once a player makes a mistake in public (and the playing field, even with only a few spectators present, is a very public venue for youth athletes), they are no longer in the moment. Their negative self-talk kicks in and they begin to berate themselves silently for making a mistake. They are usually not ready to make the next play.

A mistake ritual is a gesture and statement that individuals use to ward off the fear of making mistakes so they don't play timidly. A mistake ritual allows athletes to quickly "reset" and get ready for the next play or decision without wallowing in the past and beating themselves up for having made a mistake.

There are many mistake rituals, but here are some that we especially like. One is "Flushing Mistakes." When your athlete makes a mistake on the playing field, you can simply put your hand above your shoulder and make a motion like you are flushing a toilet. You can add commentary to the flush: "It's okay, Omar. Flush it. Next play."

Another mistake ritual is "No Sweat." This involves swiping two fingers across one's forehead like you were flicking sweat from your brow. Do this with your athlete after a mistake and add, "No sweat. Forget it and get ready for the next play!" Or you can yell "brush it off" while using a hand motion of brushing something off your shoulder.

The power of a Mistake Ritual is well documented. The "flush" played a major role in Louisiana State University's successful quest for the 2009 NCAA baseball title.

- Ryan Schimpf after hitting a homerun in the Super Regional to beat Rice:  
"I had two terrible at-bats previously and I just tried to flush it."
- Pitcher Anthony Ranaudo after a bad outing against Virginia: "I just have to be able to flush it mentally and go out there with a new attitude and approach." He then allowed only 4 hits in 6 shutout innings to defeat Arkansas in the College World Series.
- LSU Head Coach Paul Mainieri after losing to Texas in the finals:  
"This just wasn't our night. We have to flush this loss and come out ready to play for the national championship on Wednesday night" (which they won). And the pitcher who picked up the win in the final game? Frequent flusher Anthony Ranaudo.

Cal State Fullerton also used a mistake ritual to turn around a dismal season in which they were 15-16 midway through the season to help them win the 2004 NCAA baseball title. Evan Longoria and other hitters on the Tampa Bay Rays rely on the flush to help them improve their batting. And the 2000 USA Olympic Softball Team not only flushed their bad games, they all got in the shower with their uniforms on to wash away the mistakes after their third loss in a row. With their backs to the wall, they won five straight games to win the Gold Medal in Sydney.

Baseball and softball lend themselves especially well to mistake rituals, but the tool works in any sport. A hockey goalie once told me that after every goal scored against him he pictures the goal, decides whether he was out of position or if there was anything he could have done to stop the puck, then bangs his stick against the metal bar of the goal to focus on the next play.

## Flush & Park Mistakes with a Mistake Ritual *continued*

A mistake ritual may be the most powerful tool you as a Double-Goal Coach have because mistakes are what youth athletes worry about most. If you reduce fear of making mistakes, more energy will be available to learn and excel at the game.

**Parking Mistakes:** Many coaches have problems telling players it's okay to make a mistake because it seems like a violation of good teaching. When a player makes a mistake, it is the coach's responsibility to correct it. This is where the idea of a Parking Lot comes in.

When a player makes a mistake in a game you want to remember it so you can prepare the player for a better outcome next time. But in a game the moment after a mistake is not a teachable moment for most youth athletes.

At that moment, the most important thing a Double-Goal Coach can do is to help a player continue competing, which is what a mistake ritual does. You make a note of the mistake without saying anything about it at the time, and "park" it where you will remember it after the game so you can address it in practice.

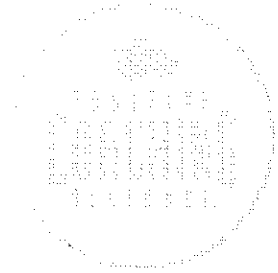
When you think about the mistake later, you can try to understand why the athlete made the mistake. It could be he was never adequately taught it. Perhaps it was taught, but she didn't understand what you asked her to do. Maybe the skill is a complex one and he hasn't mastered it physically although he understands what you want him to do.

Often, a player can perform an action until fatigue sets in which can open the floodgates for mistakes late in competitions. Sometimes nervousness causes a player to muff something she can do easily in practice. Rarely does a player understand what you have asked him to do and choose to intentionally disregard your wishes, although this may happen once in a blue moon.

If you think about the various reasons mistakes happen, a mistake ritual helps your players perform better in a game no matter why they made the mistake.

Talk with your team about the importance of not being afraid of mistakes, discuss what mistake ritual they would like to use. Then encourage your players to use the ritual in competition. This is a powerful concept with lifetime implications. And it will help your team be more successful on the scoreboard!

# Script for Filling the Emotional Tank



Have you ever heard of the home court advantage? How often do you think a team wins on its home court? It turns out that teams win at home a lot more than when they are away. One reason for this is the emotional support of the crowd. It tends to lift our emotions and make us play better.

We want to be able to play our best all of the time. To play our best we have to keep our "Emotional Tanks" full. What is an Emotional Tank? Well, it is like a gas tank in a car. When it is full, we run well, but when it is empty, we can't go very far.

Why is it important that we keep each other's tanks full? If our Emotional Tank is empty, we become negative, and we give up easier. If our tanks are full, however, we are optimistic and are able to handle difficult situations. As the coach, I will do my best to help fill your Emotional Tanks. To have a really great season, I need your help.

Think about when you miss a free throw. What would someone say to make you feel worse? ("Nice job (sarcastically)," "You stink!") See, that was easy. We call that draining the Emotional Tank. When you criticize or insult your teammates, you make them feel worse. That's why we call it draining the Emotional Tank. I will try not to drain your Emotional Tank, but sometimes I will have to correct you to help you learn the game. I will try to do this in a way that keeps your Emotional Tank full.

What would someone say to make you feel better after you missed a shot. ("Get the next one," "Shake it off!") We call that filling the Emotional Tank. Here are some ways to fill the Emotional Tank:

- Tell your teammate when you see him do something well, or when you see him giving his maximum effort, even if he does not make the play,
- Tell him when you see him improving – This will make him want to continue trying hard to improve even more,
- Listen to your teammates – If your teammate has an idea he wants to share, you can fill his tank by listening to what he has to say. No one wants to be ignored.

I promise to do all of these things. Also, I want you to do tank-filling activities with each other.

Here is a great way that you can help me. It is called the Buddy System. Once in a while at practice, I'll ask you to pair up with a buddy. It might be a different buddy every time. I want you to look for the things that your buddy is doing well. Remember, though, you have to be truthful, or else it won't mean anything. Also, try to tell your buddies exactly what they did right. If your buddy makes a nice pass, say "Good pass! Way to bounce it in to the low post."

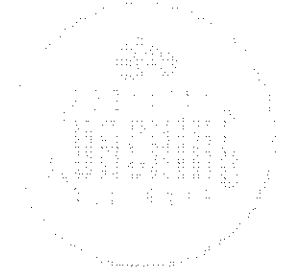
Do you think it is important to say more positives than negatives? How many more positives should you say? I am going to try to shoot for five positives for every negative. I don't want you to worry about the exact number of positives you say, just remember, be as positive as you can.

So, right now, pair up with someone else, and he will be your buddy for today's practice. Later in the practice, I am going to have each one of you report back to the team on what your buddy said to you to fill your tank.

This season is going to be an especially great season if we support each other and keep our Emotional Tanks full. With full Emotional Tanks, we will be off to the races, and there is no limit to what we can accomplish.

> Now, who can tell me some ways to fill each other's Emotional Tanks?

# Emotional Tank Talking Points



Jot down some simple talking points to use with your players at the first practice and then come back to them regularly.

For example

- We all have Emotional Tanks
- E-Tank like gas tank in car; to go far you need a full tank
- People perform better with full E-Tanks so let's learn to fill each other's tanks
- Many people find it easier to drain E-Tanks than fill them, but we want to be different
- Thanking people and noticing when they do well fills E-Tanks
- Helping your teammates bounce back from a mistake also fills E-Tanks
- Tank filling can be non-verbal – high fives, fist-bumps, pats on the back, eye contact and smiles all fill E-Tanks.
- The first few times you try to fill someone's E-Tank, it may feel uncomfortable, but stick with it and you'll get comfortable
- As coaches we're going to fill your Tanks as much as we can to help you do well but each of us becomes a tank filler, we'll have more fun and be a better team

# Positive Charting

Positive Charting is simple – but not necessarily easy. It requires effort, the effort to observe. As Yogi Berra is reported to have said, “It’s amazing what you can see if you look.”

As coaches we tend to think that we add value by finding things that are done incorrectly and improving them. But it is equally important to find things that are being done correctly to reinforce them so players will continue them. Positive Charting is a method for increasing the number of “right things” that your players do. It also creates a wonderful positive atmosphere in which players are more receptive to being corrected because they feel appreciated.

Here’s how Positive Charting works:

- 1 Write the name of each player in a box on the Positive Charting Form. If there is a specific action you want to look for with that player (for example, hustling back on defense, blocking out for rebounds) write it in the space marked “Look-For.”
- 2 Look for the positive things players do. Whenever you see one, jot a note under the player’s name (over time you’ll develop your own shorthand. The key is to write enough so you’ll remember it when you get to step #6 below.) Remember to look for team-building things that players do to encourage each other as well as their physical actions.
- 3 Include assistant coaches, parents, and players who are sitting on the bench in the Positive Charting process. It will help them see the game in a new way.
- 4 Ensure you have about the same number of comments (2-5 is good) for each player. You may have to look hard with some players. Limit the number of comments for the advanced players. Be disciplined: at the end of the game you should have 2-5 items for each player.
- 5 Be honest. Don’t write something that is not true. This is the hard part – you have to find something positive about each player. You can do it if you look hard enough.
- 6 Begin your next practice with a quick team meeting by reviewing your Positive Charting with the team. Take 30 seconds for each player in turn and share the positive with the group.
- 7 Enjoy the positive energy of your players during practice.

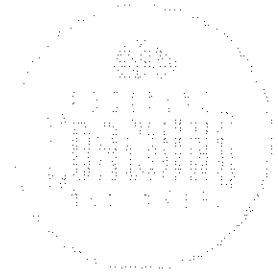
An example of the power of Positive Charting from a coach in Ohio (JohnC58) posted on Amazon.com as a review of *Positive Coaching: Building Character and Self-Esteem Through Sports* by PCA founder Jim Thompson:

*“...I coached a group of 13-14 year old softball players the year that I purchased this book. At the beginning of the season, the only team these girls could beat was themselves; in fact primarily the reason they were losing was the fact that they were beating themselves! Well, after one mediocre game, I sat the girls down on the bench and instead of reading them the riot act, I took to heart a suggestion by the author. I mentioned all the positive aspects of the game they played just to show these girls that they were capable of doing some positive things.*

*I did this after each game from then on, win or lose. Wouldn’t you know it, these same rag tag girls lost the last game of the season: the city championship game by one run (to a team that annihilated them by 12 runs in the first game of that season.) This an example of positive coaching, and I’ve used everything in this book to my advantage to become a successful POSITIVE coach. Thanks Mr. Thompson for turning my career around!”*

Positive Charting is such a powerful tool it can seem like magic. Try it. You won’t regret it.

# Positive Charting *continued*



Player: \_\_\_\_\_

Look for: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Player: \_\_\_\_\_

Look for: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Player: \_\_\_\_\_

Look for: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Player: \_\_\_\_\_

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Player: \_\_\_\_\_

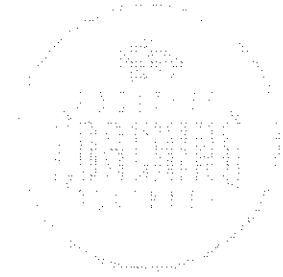
Look for: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Coaching Your Own Child

An excerpt from "The Power of Double-Goal Coaching" by Jim Thompson



Historically, young people have apprenticed with their parents' business. Today there is little opportunity for this but coaching your own child can be a wonderful experience in working together. Many parents and children look back on their times together on a sports team as some of the best moments of their lives. Here are some tips for making that shared experience a positive one.

- Ask your child. "How would you feel about me coaching your team this season?" If he has reservations, it's good to know that upfront, and if they are strong ones, you may want to choose to be a supportive sports parent this season.
- Things get complicated coaching your child. You wear two hats, as parent and as coach. Explain to your child that you need to treat her like everyone else on the team when you wear your coach's hat. But when you put your parent hat on, she is the most important person in your life (along with other family members).

Some coaches have a special cap they wear only when coaching their child's team. After a game or practice, they make a point of changing hats: "I'm taking my coach hat off and putting my dad hat on."

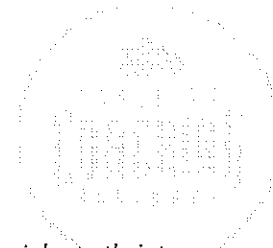
- Be sensitive to favoring or penalizing your child. Many coaches give their child advantages (like starting games or playing favored positions) the child hasn't "earned" by effort or talent. Few things poison the well with other parents and players like a coach unfairly favoring his own child.

However, many coaches are harder on their own child. We can't be objective about our own child so you may find it useful to ask another person (perhaps an assistant coach) to let you know if you are treating your own child fairly compared to other players on your team.

- If you have an assistant coach, you might find it useful to regularly have him or her give instruction and feedback to your child while you return the favor.
- Don't talk about other players on the team with your child. This places him in a complicated situation and may color his relationships with other players. He is a member of the team, not your co-coach.
- Avoid sports overload with your child. Make sure to do other family activities unrelated to sports during the season. If doing sports at home, focus on having fun rather than on drills designed to make your child better. This way she will be fresh for practice rather than feeling she gets no respite from sports.
- PCA tools like Kid-Friendly Criticism, Asking Permission, If-Then Statements, etc. are especially helpful to parent-coaches because they enable athletes to hear and embrace criticism rather than become defensive.

Your time coaching your child will pass by very quickly. Whatever happens, I encourage you to stay in the moment and enjoy this special time.

# Script for Honoring the Game



## About Positive Coaching Scripts

PCA has developed Positive Coaching Scripts to help coaches introduce positive coaching principles to their teams.

Scripts shouldn't be memorized and recited word-for-word. Read through the script and then put the ideas into your own language, words you feel comfortable using when you talk to your team.

## Positive Coaching Script for Honoring the Game

I love the game of soccer, and I hope you do too. Soccer has a long history and is the most played sport in the world. A lot of great things happen on the soccer field. I feel that it is an honor to be involved in the sport. That's why I want to talk to you about Honoring the Game.

Now, I am sure many of you have had parents or coaches talk to you about sportsmanship, or what it means to be a "good sport." What does it mean to you to be a good sport? (Answers may include "play fair" "don't cheat" etc.) Sportsmanship is important, but in order to get the most out of this soccer season, I want you to honor the game. We say the Honoring the Game goes to the ROOTS of the matter — R-O-O-T-S.

Each letter in ROOTS stands for an important part of soccer that we must respect. The R stands for Rules. The first O is for Opponents. The next O is for Officials. T is for Teammates, and the S is for Self.

**R is for Rules** The rules of soccer are what allow us to keep the game fair. Respect for the rules is important, even when it's possible to break them without getting caught. I want you to play by the rules, even if you think you won't get caught if you break them. Breaking the rules dishonors the game, even if it means that we win.

**O is for Opponents** Without opponents, we could have no game. A good opponent makes us do our best. Sometimes your opponents are friends of yours. I want you to respect your opponents, and remember they are out there to have fun just like us. I want you to try your hardest to win, not because you hate your opponent, but because you want to play your best. I promise that I will show respect for opposing coaches and teams, and I expect you to do the same.

**O is for Officials** It is very important to respect officials. Often, this can be the most difficult part of Honoring the Game, so we need to remember to keep it as a focus when we play. Officials have been selected and trained to enforce rules, and they have a very hard job. Without the officials the game would be unsafe and unfair. Officials are not perfect (just like coaches, athletes and parents!) and sometimes make mistakes. However, there is no excuse for treating officials with disrespect when they make errors. I want you to show respect for officials, even when you disagree with the call. I promise to do the same thing.

**T is for Teammates** A big part of soccer is the team. Being with your teammates should be fun. Later in life you will often be part of a team, and it is important to learn to work together. I hope you feel a commitment to each other as teammates and that you will agree to always play as hard as you can in practice and games. Please encourage and support each other on and off the playing field.

**S is for Self** Some people only Honor the Game when their opponents do, but I want us to Honor the Game no matter what the other team or its fans do. I want us to be the kind of team that Honors the Game even when others aren't because we set our own internal standards. And we live up to them no matter what. We have so much respect for ourselves that we would never do anything to dishonor the game.

So what do we mean when we say that Honoring the Game goes to the ROOTS of the matter?

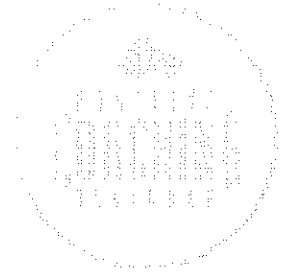
Respect for:      Rules      Opponents      Officials      Teammates      Self

If you do these five things, you are Honoring the Game. You and your teammates will get the most out of our season, and you will join the great tradition that is soccer. Now let's Honor the Game starting right now at this practice, especially when we scrimmage.

> Who can give me an example of how we Honor the Game of soccer?

> What does each letter stand for?

# Honor the Game Talking Points

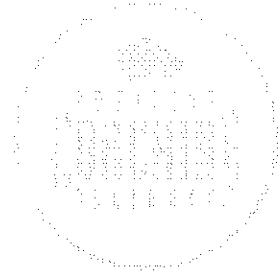


Jot down some talking points to use with your players at an early practice and then return to them throughout the season. For example,

- I want us to Honor the Game so we can be proud of ourselves win or lose
- The acronym ROOTS will help us remember what we need to do.
- **R** – We obey the Rules even if we can get away with bending them, and even if our opponents don't.
- **O** – A worthy opponent helps us get better – we want to play fierce and friendly and never think of them as enemies.
- **O** – We respect Officials even when bad calls go against us. I don't want you to speak to officials during a game even if you are being treated unfairly, okay?
- **T** – We don't do anything to embarrass our teammates, on or off the field.
- **S** for Self – Don't Honor the Game because I tell you to. Do it because you want to. We live up to our own standards even if our opponent doesn't.
- Later in the season ask, "Who remembers what the R stands for? The O?" etc.

# Intervening on the Sidelines

An Honoring-the-Game Plan for Coaches



Prevention is the best cure. Coaches who create a team culture based on Honoring the Game likely will have fewer problems with parents and fans on the sidelines. But some parents and fans will inevitably misbehave when things go against their team or child. When that happens, coaches have the responsibility to intervene, to defend the positive sports culture we want for our children. Some suggestions:

**Cue parents before games** Take time to remind parents before the game to Honor the Game.

*"Today's game is important for us, and we want to play our best. I want to remind you to Honor the Game today. I expect everyone associated with our team to act to make us proud of each other. If there is a bad call by the official, I want you to be silent. If there is a problem with the officiating, it's my job to address it, not yours. Your job is to fill the Emotional Tanks of our players and be a good role model for our kids. Everyone understand? Okay. Thanks."*

**Introduce Officials to Parent** If the situation allows, ask the officials if you can introduce them to your parents.

*"These are the officials for today's game. This is John Jordan and Heather Harris. They'll be making the calls today, and I know we all want to show them the respect they deserve. Let's give them a hand for being willing to do a tough job."* (Lead clapping.)

**Check in with Culture-Keeper** If you haven't already recruited a parent as "Culture-Keeper" to be your ally and promote sideline behavior that Honors the Game, do so as soon as you can. Always check in with your culture-keeper before a game.

*"Thanks for serving as the team's culture-keeper. I want everyone to Honor the Game today. Make sure to touch base with each parent early in the game. Say hello and feel free to remind them that we want to set an example for our kids to Honor the Game. Are you all set? Do you have any questions? Thanks again!"*

**Model the Behavior You Want to See** Parents pick up on your behavior. If you harp at officials, they'll be more likely to do the same. If you are calm and focused, it will be easier for them to act like you.

**Anticipate** When an official makes a "bad" call that favors your team, your parents are not likely to misbehave. If you think about it, you can usually anticipate situations in which parents are likely to become upset. For example,

- If a game determines which team goes on in the playoffs, expect parents to be more likely to lose control than in an early season game. You might even invite a board member or administrator to attend the game as a precaution.
- A close game is more likely to see misbehavior than a game decided early.
- A call against your team at the end of a game is more likely to attract jeers than one early in the game.
- If there is a perception that the other team is playing rough and the officials are not calling penalties, this is a combustible situation.

The bottom line: If a call upsets you, you can expect your parents to also be unhappy about it. That is a sign to monitor what's going on with your parents and fans on the sideline.

**Nip Problems in the Bud** The earlier you can respond to bad sideline behavior, the less likely it is to get out of control. Think of a match dropped in a dry forest. It's relatively easy to put out the fire when the match first drops. But a short time later, when the blaze has gotten going, it can be very difficult to put out.

At the first example of sideline misbehavior, even if it's reasonably mild, let your parents know that it's not okay.

*"Okay, cool it now. I don't want you to do anything that will distract or embarrass our players. I want you to Honor the Game"*

Sometimes just a look and a downward hand movement to "calm down" will do the job!

## Intervening on the Sidelines *continued*

**Refer to Higher Standard** People tend to respond to a higher authority or standard. You should remind them that the higher standard for your team is behavior that Honors the Game.

If your parents have signed the PCA Parent Pledge (or something comparable), then remind them of that.

*"Calm down. Remember that pledge you signed? You agreed to Honor the Game even when there is a bad call. This game is for the players, and you all agreed to set a good example for them."*

**Stay Calm** To paraphrase Rudyard Kipling: If you can keep your head while all around you others are losing theirs...you'll get better results. Getting upset at parents who are already upset may only add fuel to the fire. Be firm but calm. And if you can't be calm, then be as calm as you can be.

You just have to let people know their behavior is unacceptable. It can be as simple as saying, in a calm voice, "That's not okay. I want you to Honor the Game."

**Respect People's "Personal Space"** There is a zone of space around people called "personal space." Whenever someone invades another person's personal space without permission, it activates self-protection instincts and a situation can escalate. Be scrupulous about respecting other people's personal space. Avoid getting in someone's face while you are telling him or her to behave themselves. Stay at least arm's length away, and don't approach in what might be interpreted as a threatening manner. It will help nothing if a parent turns his or her anger, verbal or physical, on you.

**When Parents Are Upset with You** Sometimes it isn't the official who is the target of parent verbal abuse. If you become the target of one or more parents' unhappiness in a game, tell them, in as calm a way as you can,

*"This isn't the time to deal with this. I need to focus on the kids and the game right now. I'll talk with you when the game is over. Now I need you to calm down and let the kids play the game."*

**After the Moment** Later you may conclude that you need to have a follow-up conversation with one or more of the parents to make sure that things won't get out of hand again.

**Reinforce Good Behavior** People do what gets rewarded. A good way to stimulate good behavior is to recognize and reinforce good behavior when it happens. So make a point of thanking parents after every game in which they behave themselves.

*"Thank you for setting a good example today. We want to be known as a team that Honors the Game, and today you really did a good job of that. That makes my job easier and it allows the kids to focus on playing their best rather than having to worry about whether they are going to be embarrassed by their parents. Thank you."*

**Recognize the Challenge** Sometimes it can help to recognize the difficulty of what you are asking of parents. When a parent begins to yell at an official, you might say

*"No one ever said it was going to be easy to remain silent when the official makes a call that you don't like, but I know you can do it!"*

**What If You Don't Intervene Perfectly?** You don't have to be perfect. That is important enough that it bears repeating: You don't have to be perfect. You can stammer; the words can come out all wrong; you can be too subtle or too abrupt. That's okay. What's not okay is to let misbehavior go by without intervening.

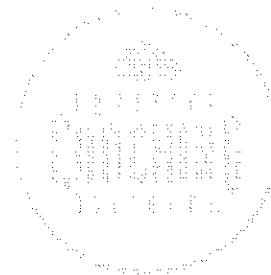
You are the leader of the team. The team includes the players and their parents (and other fans). You need to intervene to let parents and fans on the sidelines know what is acceptable and what is not.

Don't worry about being perfect. Intervene as best you can. It doesn't matter so much how well you intervene. It does matter that you do it! So, do it.

**Be Willing to Ask for Help** Sometimes no matter what you do or how well you handle a situation, nothing helps. Recognize when to step back and ask for help. If you feel you have done all you can to get parents to behave and it's still not working, call on the leaders of your organization to step in and help resolve the situation.

# "Dealing with Behavior Problems"

Excerpted from *The Double-Goal Coach* by Jim Thompson



Establishing a strong culture – a way of doing things on your team – will minimize misbehavior by your players. But even so, kids will misbehave from time to time. Three principles should form the basis of shaping the behavior of your team:

- 1 Reinforce behavior you want;
- 2 Ignore behavior you don't want; and
- 3 When you can't ignore, intervene in a "least-attention" manner.

1 **Reinforce Behavior You Want:** Attention, whether favorable or unfavorable, is reinforcing to many kids. Most people understand that when we give positive attention to a child ("Way to go!"), he tends to increase behavior that brought him the attention. What isn't well understood is that negative attention ("No, no, not like that!") can also increase a behavior, especially for kids who don't believe they have the ability to get an adult's attention with good behavior.

Eleven of my 12 players come running at my signal, but Victor takes forever. Where does my attention go? I have 11 players gathering attentively around me as if I am the fount of all wisdom, but I ignore them and focus my attention on Victor, who is not doing what I want him to do. "Victor, how many times (voice rising!) do I have to tell you to come right away when you hear one long whistle?"

Often we ignore the players who do what we want, and lavish attention – albeit negative attention – on those not doing what we want. What we give attention to in children can increase the behavior, whether praising them or yelling at them.

I don't like to be yelled at. So I assume when I yell at Victor he doesn't like it either, and it will cause him to change. Often the exact opposite is the case. Giving attention, even if negative, to Victor for his bad behavior can increase it.

By focusing my attention on the laggard I am also punishing the players who came in right away. Instead I should reinforce them! "Hey, Jeremy, Ruben, Brent, I really appreciate the way you came running in right away at the whistle. That really helps us because we have a limited amount of time for practice. When you come right away, it means we can get more accomplished. Thanks."

When kids learn that you give attention for appropriate behavior, they often compete to please you, for example, by trying to be the first to come running so you will notice and praise them. Which is good, but what about Victor?

2 **Ignore Behavior You Don't Want:** While Victor is not doing what I want him to, he ceases to exist as far as I am concerned. This technique is called "extinction." Until Victor does what I want him to do, he is extinct. Instead I thank those who came right away and move on to the next task.

Now it can get really interesting if I truly am able to ignore Victor. If Victor sees that he is being ignored and others are getting your attention, he may finally come running saying, "Hey, Coach, How about me? I came in."

Now I can say in a matter-of-fact way, "Victor, these guys came right away so I was thanking them. But if you come right away next time, I'll thank you as well. Now let's get going with the next drill."

This tactic works like magic. Kids who misbehave are used to getting attention for misbehaving. Their parents and teachers are a daily source of attention available to them whenever they misbehave. And since often they don't believe they can get attention for doing something positive, they'll take it in the only way

## “Dealing with Behavior Problems” *continued*

they think they can get it. So when you ignore their misbehavior, it is not to their liking. When they find out that they can very easily get your attention by doing what you want them to do, they tend to do it.

But that’s with kids. Does extinction also work with teenagers? PCA’s Tina Syer coached a 17-year-old field hockey player who never was ready when it was time to start warming up. The rest of the girls were ready to go, and she would still have one sock on. Before the next tournament Tina asked how much warm-up time was needed. The team agreed on 45 minutes. Forty-five minutes before the next game, the same player had only one shoe on. Tina said, “Let’s go” and the team took off, leaving the laggard behind, who quickly laced her shoes and ran to catch up. She was never late again. With no attention from coach or teammates, her behavior shriveled up like a plant receiving no water.

So extinction works. But what if you just can’t ignore inappropriate behavior?

- 3 **When You Can’t Ignore:** Sometimes you can’t ignore a player’s behavior. Perhaps he is putting himself or others in danger (you aren’t really ignoring him; you’re keeping an eye on him without letting him know it). You need to stop him from hurting himself or others. When a player acts in a way that dishonors the game, it cannot be ignored. Finally, you can’t ignore misbehavior that disrupts your ability to work with your team. When you have to intervene, here’s how to do it in an effective way.

The “Least-Attention Manner”: Let’s say Ben is talking while you are speaking to the team. You calmly call Ben aside. “Ben, I need you to stand over here until you can obey the rules that we all agreed on – that is to not talk while I’m talking. When you are ready to follow the rules, come back and join us.”

Sometimes that’s all it will take. But Ben may try to play you like a “yo-yo.” He immediately bounces back and disrupts things again. You calmly intervene again but this time you add a check-in. “Ben, you weren’t ready to rejoin the team just now, so I want you to think about what you need to do to rejoin us. I’ll be back soon to see if you’re ready to follow the rules. Sit here and think about how you want to behave until I come back.”

Now is the time to do a fun activity – a shooting drill for basketball, soccer or lacrosse, a hitting drill for baseball or softball – so Ben is missing something he would enjoy. Don’t do a conditioning drill at this time!

Now check in with Ben. “Ben, can you tell me why I had you stand apart from the rest of the team?” You want hear: “I was talking while you were talking.” If he isn’t able to do this, prompt him: “Was it because you were talking while I was talking?” Don’t let him rejoin the team until he acknowledges it.

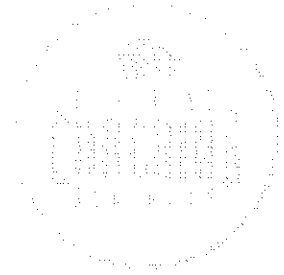
But you’re not done yet. You want him to commit to follow the rules when he rejoins the team. “What do you need to do when you rejoin the team?” Again, if he can’t articulate the desired behavior, you can prompt him. “When you rejoin us, you need to listen while I’m talking. Do you think you can do that now?” Again, he has to agree, at least with a head nod.

Now you’ve intervened to stop Ben’s misbehavior from ruining the practice for everyone else, and in a way that helps him learn to control himself. You’ve told him how he can be part of the team and you’ve done it with a minimum amount of disruption of the rest of the team.

### The Discipline of the Three C’s

Many coaches think it is a sign of strength to get angry with players but it is the opposite. Becoming negative or visibly angry with players is a sign of weakness and lack of self-discipline. When you communicate expectations clearly, and have a plan for dealing with misbehavior, you are in a position of strength. You can gently enforce rules without raising your voice. You don’t have to get upset. You can be calm because there is a consequence that you administer in a consistent manner. That’s what we call the Three C’s: Calmness, Consequences and Consistency.

# Player of the Day



If we are honest we will admit that we all have had players that we didn't relate well to. Some kids just push our buttons. When you have a player like this, make him Player of the Day. Don't tell the player this but make sure to get your co-coaches on the same page. "Today, Doug is Player of the Day. Every time he does anything the least bit positive, we reinforce him for it. Okay?"

If he runs hard for half a drill, say, "Doug, great hustle at the beginning!" All your attention goes to things he is doing well. Ignore the things he is not doing well.

This tool can make a huge difference with kids who regularly have low E-Tanks. Many kids have problems at home, in school or with friends and they come to your practice with a chip on their shoulder. When you make a player like this Player of the Day, you do two important things.

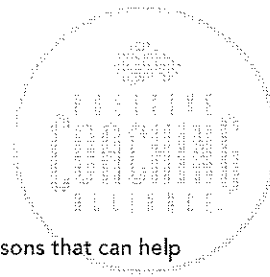
You fill his tank in a way he is not used to and which he cannot ignore. Even for disturbed, behavior-problem kids (and I have worked extensively with them), this kind of tank filling makes them feel better about themselves.

The other thing that happens is that you begin to see the player in a better light. Cognitive dissonance happens when our behavior and our thoughts are not aligned, and that is uncomfortable. We don't like acting in ways that are different from our feelings and thoughts, so we change one or the other. When you treat Doug as Player of the Day, your attitude toward him becomes more positive as well. And having a coach who becomes more positive toward him is a very good thing for him!





# Script for Redefining "Winner"



Baseball is a great game. It's a lot of fun to play, and it's also a way that we learn important lessons that can help us later in life. I know that I learned a lot from playing competitive sports when I was your age.

I want to tell you about a goal I have for the team and for each of you individually this season. I want each of us to "Act like a winner to be a winner."

There are two kinds of winners. What is one kind of winner? What does "winner" mean to you? (Answer likely to be something like "The one who has the most points at the end of the game.")

One kind of winner is the team that has the most points on the scoreboard at the end of the game. And we want to be that kind of winner. We want to work as hard as we can to win as many games as we can.

There is another kind of winner though that is just as important. That is a winner in life.

We want to learn from this season how to be a winner in everything we do, not just baseball.

To be a winner we need to start acting like a winner. And a winner is someone who is working for mastery of whatever activity he or she is doing. So in baseball we want to work toward mastery to be the best baseball player and team we can be. And we want to learn how to achieve mastery at anything we want to be good at.

To help understand the way that we achieve mastery, we use the example of a tree that we call the Tree of Mastery. If you climb the Tree of Mastery you will be successful.

We say that the Tree of Mastery is an ELM tree because there are three things you need to do to climb the ELM Tree of Mastery:

**1 E is for Effort.** We want to give our best effort every time we come out on the field. I am more concerned that we try our hardest than I am if we win. We could win against a weak team without giving it our best effort, and that doesn't really mean anything.

On the other hand we could play a team that was stronger than we are and try our very hardest and lose. I would be proud of us in that case because we were acting like a winner by trying our hardest even though the other team ended up winning the game on the scoreboard.

So the first part of the ELM Tree is E for Effort.

**2 L is for Learning.** We want to continue learning and improving every week in practice and every time we play a game. If we continue to learn, we will get better and that is more important than whether or not we are better than some other team.

We could be better than another team without learning and improving if that team is a weak team. And we could be weaker than another team but be learn-

ing a lot and getting better all the time. It's more important to me that we learn and improve than it is to beat a team that isn't very good. And it's more important that we learn and improve even if we lose to a team that is stronger than we are.

So the second part of the ELM Tree is L for Learning.

**3 M is for how we respond to Mistakes.** Most people think it's bad to make a mistake. But mistakes are part of the learning process. You can't learn something as complicated as baseball if you are afraid to make a mistake. And people that are afraid to make a mistake often don't even try very hard.

I want you to know that it is okay to make a mistake on this team. We want to learn from our mistakes and not let them discourage us or keep us from working hard.

So, is it okay to make a mistake on this team? Yes, it is. And the third part of the ELM Tree is M for how we respond to a Mistake.

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Acting like a winner involves three things. It means

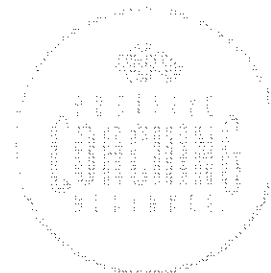
- *Giving your best effort every time*
- *Continuing to learn and improve, and*
- *Not letting mistakes (or fear of making a mistake) stop you.*

If you do these three things, you are acting like a winner, and you will be a winner in life as well as baseball. Now let's have a great practice. Give it your best effort, learn as much as you can, and don't worry about making a mistake.

> Oh, before we go, what kind of a tree is the Tree of Mastery?

> What does each letter stand for?

# ELM Tree Talking Points



- The Tree of Mastery is an ELM Tree. ELM stands for **E** for Effort, **L** for Learning, **M** for bouncing back from Mistakes
- Research shows athletes who focus on ELM improve faster and do better on the scoreboard. To be our best we should focus on ELM.
- If you give your best effort every time, I'll be proud of you no matter what the score is.
- Learning requires having a Teachable Spirit. Let's try to learn something to get better every practice and every game.
- The best players don't throw a tantrum when they make a mistake, they reset on the next play and then later they try to learn from their mistake.
- I want you to play with enthusiasm and be aggressive. It's okay to make a mistake – the key is to bounce back quickly from it so you can make the next play. We'll learn a mistake ritual we can use to recover quickly from mistakes.

You might reinforce the L in ELM by giving your players a "homework" assignment to watch their sport at the college or professional level on TV and write down at least one thing they learned that they could try in their own practice.