

Check (out) Her Stick!

A report from the sidelines of the NCJLA Girl's Division

Ending our season with the best cleat forward...

In reality, we spend more time planning for each season of lacrosse than the season itself. It's just always surprising to me though when the end of the season seems to be approaching so quickly. The end is not here yet and there are still many lessons to be taught out on the fields.

One such example can be of honoring not just the game, but the girls who participate in the sport as well, that what our first and primary goal out on the grass/turf each week is to teach respect for ourselves and others. As I was perusing the scores I noticed many games with large point spreads of 10 or 15 points. In all fairness, when we schedule games, we never know what the strength of the opposing team is going to be, so we know that most strong teams aren't scheduling games with weaker teams on purpose. It should be pointed out that point spread is never used in any type of ranking or standings for our league. So, we have to ask ourselves as coaches and administrators, how big of a point differential is "too big" and what can we do about it?

Truthfully there is no "right" or "wrong" point spread. It comes down to whatever feels comfortable and fits in with your own coaching philosophy. For me, in junior youth sports, it's a combination of point spread (5-6), how my team earned those points (back to back...in the first two minutes of the game etc), and whether or not my team has out-skilled the other team. When/if while coaching you feel that your players have out-skilled the other team I encourage you to ask the following of your players:

1. Call a timeout, be clear and direct with your girls, what and why you'd like them to do any of the following. It's important that they understand the reasoning behind your coaching motives (honoring the game, respect, enhancing their skill set etc). Make sure they understand there are consequences for not doing what they are being asked of such as being subbed out.
2. Increase the number of passes they need to make before going to goal (e.g. from 3-6).
3. Require that they use their non-dominant hand only.
4. Keep 5 players over the restraining line rather than 4.
5. Have only those who haven't scored yet this season shoot on goal.
6. Rotate some defensively strong players to offense and vice versa (though this should be happening anyway as the girls are too young to sort into specific positions).
7. Have only 2 girls and your center on the circle for the draw.
8. When the other team does do something well, such as 3 seconds good defense or scores, strongly encourage your girls to say, "nice job!" and reward your girls with the game ball or something for doing this.
9. Do not, if you have a set goalie, take her out and put in a player who has never played goal. This is unsafe for the new player and is demoralizing for the other team (they do notice)...For some reason though junior girl players love to ask if they can just go in and play goal.
10. Have them sag off the player while playing defense until they get to the other teams' offensive end of the field.

Please keep in mind that it is your call as coaches whether or not to do any of the above. Some games, even though the point spread is high, the girls still may be having fun and enjoy the challenge. However, if you see the other team start dragging their sticks as they come to the center circle for the draw, come off the field crying, or start complaining, it may be time to use some fairness strategies.

Positive Sportslike Behavior Watch

From: Coach Elaine Lea-Chou Firehawks G13A
To: Coach Carlton Skyline G13B

Our goalie was a running late and we had an empty cage for our first game against Skyline U13B. One of the Skyline goalies (sorry I did not catch her name) graciously lent us all of her gear so we could warm up another player and be ready to play. Coach Carlton gave us some extra time to get it all together and was really understanding, accommodating, and positive about the whole situation! His attitude showed in his team, as his girls all had great attitudes, positive words, and played with grace. They were such a fun team to play against!

Positive Sportslike Behavior Watch

From: Coach Elaine Lea-Chou Firehawks G13A
To: Coach Dean Lamorinda

One of our players had an illegal stick (too many curls around the shooting strings) – the player borrowed a stick and continued to play (but badly with the replacement stick). She got her stick back fixed later, and I later heard that an opponent's coach fixed it for us

Low Moments:

- 1) Young coaches talking back to an umpire about calls, when the umpire went to let them know that their behavior was out of line the coaches told the umpire to, "go away".
- 2) Parents caught on tape complaining about the calls umpires were making from the sideline and then getting into it with the host site's coach who asked them to stop.