

Youth Sports

Youth coaching awards established by Gatorade

While it's often said that sports builds character, amateur coaches with a win-at-all-costs attitude can unknowingly destroy character in many hopeful young athletes.

A national awards program has been established to better ensure that participation in organized sports will be a positive learning experience for young softball and baseball players.

This summer the Gatorade Youth Coach Awards will again honor volunteer youth coaches who stress fun, safety, sportsmanship and skill development before winning.

"By honoring volunteer youth coaches nationwide who make baseball a positive, educational experience, other youth coaches will become more aware of the important role they play in the emotional and physical development of today's youth," said Bill Schmidt, director of sports marketing for the Quaker Oats

Co., maker of Gatorade Thirst Quencher. "In the long run we hope to improve the quality of sports experience for young people."

All volunteer youth baseball and softball coaches of players ages 5 to 16 are eligible for the award. Coaches can be nominated by parents, team members, fellow coaches, league administrators or fans.

Ten recipients will be selected to receive the Youth Coach Awards commemorative plaque. One National Youth Coach of the Year will receive an expense-paid trip for two to the World Series in October.

The Youth Coach Awards are endorsed by major-league baseball's Professional Baseball Athletic Trainers Society (PBATS) and are conducted in cooperation with the National Youth Sports Coaches Association (NYSCA) and Pony Baseball Inc.

"We wholeheartedly support the awards," Pony Baseball Commissioner Leo Trich said, "because a win-at-all-costs mentality can be emotionally harmful for some less-skilled youngsters who never get a chance to play. We believe baseball is a game that should be enjoyed by every young person who has the desire to play."

PBATS President Charlie Moss said overplaying young athletes is a major problem.

"Many coaches don't realize the potential physical harm of playing a kid too hard or long," said Moss, who also serves as the trainer for the Boston Red Sox. "We stand behind the program because it's making coaches more conscious of necessary safety precautions."

The national awards program, now in its third year, has begun to make an impact on youth leagues across the country.

"If the number of requests for nomination forms is any indication, parents and coaches are concerned about making sports fun for kids," NYSCA President Fred Enigh said. "People truly want to recognize those coaches who improve their children's lives."

To obtain information forms, submit requests to the Gatorade Youth Coach Awards, 225 W. Ohio St., Chicago, Ill. 60610. Nominations must be submitted by Aug. 31.

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Len Bias

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drugs, to move into a new circle and really become one of the boys.

"It's easy to get it anywhere, not only in high school," said Barry Lowe, an offensive lineman from Orlando. "You walk down the road and people walk up to you and ask you if you want drugs. They aren't worried about it. They offer you marijuana, cocaine. That's the problem with drugs today -- they are too easy to get. Now big quantities are starting to come in, and that drives down the price. Now even younger kids are able to afford them."

Junior high kids buying cocaine with their lunch money? It could happen. Police officials say that in some cities small amounts of a potent form of cocaine called "crack" can be had for as little as \$10. Some ingenious dealers have even set up "crack houses" where young people can grab

some of the stuff during their walks to school.

Without question, it's a new era, far different from when today's parents grew up. Phil Newlon, a high school football coach in Orlando, remembers a different way to have a wild time.

"A guy used to go out and drink a beer," he said. "Beer is not it anymore."

If beer is no longer what's happening, how are parents to relate to today's drug use? A good question, said Freddie Stephens, a coach in Jacksonville, Fla.

"I'm not equipped to deal with it (drug use)," Stephens said. "I have never experienced it, I have never had any dealings with people who experienced drugs. I have always run away from it, and I just would not know what to tell a kid except to get professional help."

Of course, it seldom comes to that. Too many youngsters slip

through the cracks and carry their drug experimentation right into their college and adult lives. If athletes, with all the safeguards set up to detect drug abuse, can slip through into the pros with their habits, what about the average student who is going unwatched? How many kids are walking around with short fuses?

"It's just a big mess," said Joe Siffri, an offensive guard from Doraville, Ga. "I think it (adolescent drug use) seems to slow down when these big names get in trouble, but they seem to jump right back on the bandwagon as soon as that's over."

For sure, there will be more drug use and, yes, even more deaths. Drug abuse continues to soar, and there appears to be no effective deterrent. Not even the horrible death of a superstar like Len Bias. May the vision of his passing be forever etched on the minds of today's youth.

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PLAY BALL

Area Colleges

From Page B1

Last fall, the University of North Carolina Board of Governors called on its Division I schools to institute drug testing and education programs for basketball and football.

"At Carolina and State, there is a program that obtains the permission of the student," said Art Padilla, associate vice president of the UNC system. "But the students don't know when they are going to be tested."

"I think it's only a matter of time before almost all colleges and universities have some form of drug testing for athletes," said Dr. Jerald

Hawkins, sports medicine coordinator for Guilford College.

School officials say that their programs are designed to be preventive, rather than punitive, and that they have found no major drug problems.

Wake Forest began testing its 300 athletes for drugs two years ago. Three percent tested positive for marijuana the first time, and no other drugs were found in the urinalysis tests. No athlete had a second positive test, said Dr. George Rovere, director of the sports medicine unit.

Athletes with a positive first

test can continue playing sports, Rovere said, "but they know Big Brother is looking at them." A second positive test would result in temporary suspension. A third could mean losing their athletic scholarship or suspension.

Duke University has a drug counseling program, and school officials say students suspected of using drugs will be tested if they don't attend.

"If we suspect you are taking drugs and you test positive, you are through with athletics at Duke," said Athletic Director Tom Butters.

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