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HEADLINE: 10 WAYS TO MAKE KIDS QUIT
BYLINE: TOM KUYPER, Special for The Republic

Research shows that approximately 70 percent of all kids who participate in youth sports will drop out by the age of 13. Here are my top 10 ways that parents and coaches contribute to this statistic:

1. Persuade your child to play only one sport. Specialization in youth sports has become very popular. Year-round club sports with year-round commitment and financial obligations have caught the eyes of many parents. The pressure to be good, and the time spent with practice and games, creates burnout. Burnout ultimately leads to quitting.

2. Yell a lot. Get on the referees for every bad call. Get upset with your child's coach and complain a lot about playing time. Embarrassing your kids in public will help them to become one of the 70 percent.

3. Become all-consumed. Spend hours on the phone plotting out your child's next few years. Find new teams for them to play on if things don't go just your way. Plan out their weekends for them, including extra practice time.

4. Become the self-appointed, personal statistician. Success to some parents means numbers on a stat sheet. Performance-based approval is too much pressure for kids. It is so important that our kids are affirmed by their efforts and character. False expectations and previous statistics can become guidelines that somehow say failure if comparable results are not produced.

5. Place family time as a second priority. No more hanging out in the back yard playing silly nonsense games. You have drills to work on. And, remember your percentages were down last game, so we have some work to do. Playing Marco Polo in the pool can wait.

6. Talk about the importance of a college scholarship on a daily basis. Kids are perceptive and pick up on your motives. If you want to build up pressure for a long time, this one will do it.

7. Make sure it's all about winning. If you lose sight of the real important things to be learned, then life skills get overshadowed by misplaced values. Youth sports are a ready-made platform for learning commitment, teamwork, hard work, sportsmanship, and how to win and lose. These are the things that the kids take with them for the rest of their lives. Not many adults can even remember what place their third-grade baseball team finished in. It's the heart issues and role modeling that stick around forever.

8. Take all the fun out of it. Studies show that kids play sports to have fun. One of the most simple but profound things a child said to me during an interview was that she played sports because it was supposed to be fun, and if it wasn't fun, then she asks herself why she would even play.

9. Use punishment to try to correct a mistake. I see too many coaches who use push-ups as a corrective tool for missing free throws. Practicing more free throws is the answer. Instead of running laps for striking out, how about spending that time with more batting practice?

10. Make practice long and boring. Being creative is a valuable ingredient. Do drills in a way that the kids are all moving and having a good time. Make sure there are always scrimmages and game time.
By the way, if you know of kids or stories worthy of being shared, let me know!