



## Champion Parent Focus: What Abuse Looks Like in Sport

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. **Preventing abuse starts with recognizing the types of Abuse and relating those types directly to experiences in sport.**

Abuse is defined as any act or failure to act that endangers a young person emotionally or physically. There are four types of abuse that may occur within the sport environment.

- **Physical abuse** includes any kind of hitting, slapping, pushing, or form of punishment (e.g., running "suicides" until players vomit or cramp up) that causes harm. A Notre Dame research study found 4% of child athletes reported their coach kicked or hit a player.
- **Sexual abuse** includes any kind of touching or observing that violates an athlete's privacy. It also includes showing children inappropriate sexual material or making sexual comments.
- **Emotional abuse** includes verbal and physical actions that humiliate or put down a young person or can harm the psychological well-being of the athlete. Emotional abuse can be quite common in sports. From the Notre Dame study, 11% of children reported that their coach made fun of a member of their team. Although many athletes may become immune to it, verbal abuse is an unwarranted violation of the person and has no place in sports, especially within the Play



**"Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others"**

**~Philippians 2:4**

Like A Champion philosophy of coaching.

- **Neglect** – A failure to respond to athletes' physical and psychological needs. Coaches should be sensitive to possible injuries (especially concussions) as well as illnesses, bullying, and fatigue. A 1995 study by the Minnesota State Amateur Athletic Commission found that 21.5 percent of the respondents said they had been pressured to play with an injury.

Sports cultures provide an ideal breeding ground for child abuse for several reasons. Sports provide opportunities for coaches to form close, trusting relationships with athletes and to be alone with them. Coaches are often assumed to be moral leaders, who instill the virtues of hard work and loyalty, which are viewed as essential for success in life, so abusive tactics may be tolerated in the name of discipline and character-formation.

If you recognize any of these forms of abuse in sport, speak with an administrator in your school or league right away. **Parents can play a role in changing a toxic abusive sport culture for their own athletes and other children.** Parents can help to hold sports programs accountable to provide all athletes with a safe environment and the opportunity to learn important physical skills and life values, thus receiving the best that sport can provide.