



Coach Won't Stop Swearing

This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.

“Hi, I have a very important question. If a coach who constantly uses the F-word directed at youth soccer players doesn't respond to repeated requests to stop, and who declares to all around him, 'Nobody tells me what to say or what to do at my practice,' how can one stop him?”

PCA Response by Ray Lokar, PCA Trainer–Los Angeles, and Joe Scally, PCA Trainer–Chicago

Goodness, gracious. Profanity on the playing field is nothing new, but a coach dropping F bombs around young players is not appropriate. A coach who is so casual about swearing undermines parents who work to teach their kids not to curse. This coach can certainly develop a better vocabulary to express himself, one that does not demonstrate disrespect for everyone around him.

The coach should be reminded that youth sports are about education. We would be appalled at a classroom teacher who emphasized lessons with the F word. This coach is modeling coarse rather than clear or creative expression.

Legendary coach John Wooden taught his players in many ways, including by clearly explaining the techniques, tactics and strategies of the game. He did not curse, but his player's knew he was extra serious when he said “Goodness, gracious, sakes alive.” His dignified approach helped those he coached become better players and, more importantly, better young men.

The type of language you describe should not be tolerated around youth athletes. Parents may ignore a coach's foul language for a number of reasons including a winning record, a mistaken belief that it toughens up the players, or a view, based on watching professional sports, that this is how coaches are supposed to act. But this coach is swearing at kids. It's hard to imagine that parents would tolerate that in any other setting.

To your credit you have tried to resolve the issue by talking with the coach. Submitting his name to the league was an appropriate next step. While he may deserve a second chance, it should be dependent on an agreement that he will clean up his language. If the league does not take action, you will have to consider whether some other club might be better for your child.

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BETTER ATHLETES
BETTER PEOPLE



Coach Won't Stop Swearing, continued

Finally, while it is not the main concern in this situation, the coach's undisciplined language likely makes him less effective. For one thing, players who follow the coach's lead could be carded if they let the F word slip during a game. Also, while an occasional slip into profanity, though not recommended, may get the players' attention, constant cursing has, at best, no impact or is a distraction.

As a young athlete I had a coach who frequently invoked the Almighty against opponents, officials and even his own players. During practice we began to count the number of times he swore and made bets on whether he would break his record. Our focus was less than optimal.

By contrast, a highly successful coach I later played for never cursed, but occasionally said "God bless it" in a way that immediately got everyone's attention. This coach needs to consider how his choice of language is affecting his relationship with the players.

Ray Lokar has coached a variety of sports for over 25 years at the youth, high school, and college levels, including his son and two daughters who have gone on to play college athletics, as well as an 8-year old son playing youth sports. Ray was the Head Basketball Coach of the 2002 California Interscholastic Federation Champions while at Bishop Amat High School and is a Past-President of the Southern California Interscholastic Basketball Coaches Association.

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