



BETTER ATHLETES
BETTER PEOPLE

Watching the Olympics with Your Youth Athletes

As you've followed the Olympics, watching your favorite events with youth athletes you are coaching and/or parenting, you may have encountered many teachable moments. Here is advice on what to look for and how to use teachable moments from the Olympics to develop Better Athletes, Better People...

It's up to parents and coaches to help kids draw out life lessons from sports. Sometimes we think kids will simply absorb the lessons that are obvious to us as adults, but that is not often the case. One way to get at those life lessons is by **"asking rather than telling"** when watching sports together.

For example, watching the recent Super Bowl, you might have asked after the Nick Foles 4th down touchdown, "What do you think Nick Foles was feeling before the play?" Your kids may talk about how he was probably nervous, which could result in a wonderful conversation about how he handled those feelings and still executed the play. Then we talked about other times when people feel nervous (before presenting something to the class at school, before performing in an assembly/concert, etc.) and how they could use techniques from sports (like taking deep breaths) to help them in these other settings.

As you've watched the Olympics with your youth athletes, have you kept your eye out for **both positive and negative life lessons**? If you've seen poor sportsmanship, you might ask, "What did you think of that? What would you have done differently there?" As the games wrap up over the next week, consider examples of both positive and negative sportsmanship and consider what you might ask your kid about those moments.

What about positive and negative behavior on **social media**? If your youth athletes see positive and negative comments posted by athletes and fans on social media, how might you talk to your athlete about that? There are life lessons to be learned for youth not just in watching the Olympics with your kid, but also watching for the appropriate reaction on social media. As athletes are more accessible than ever, this might be a great place to start the conversation. How might you use online conversations to start a real conversation with your kid about sportsmanship in the Olympics?

We also see Olympians **picking up their teammates** (and perhaps even an opponent) after a loss or disappointing performance. Talk with your kids about times when their classmates, friends and/or teammates are down and what they can specifically do to pick them up - this might be in the middle of a performance or just after it's over.

Life lessons also are available from the coverage of Olympians **attending events other than their own**, when cameras often find them cheering in the stands. These athletes are supporting their Olympic teammates (even outside their own sport), which can plant the seed for your kids to support their friends or classmates at others sports events, or music/drama performances, etc.

Also keep a **close eye on the medal ceremonies**. That's when you'll see the opportunity for life lessons in winning and losing gracefully. For example, if a sorely disappointed Silver medalist can overcome narrowly missing

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Watching the Olympics with Your Youth Athletes, continued

Gold and share sincere congratulations, that is an opportunity to talk with kids about times they were disappointed with an outcome and compare it to what we're seeing on TV. "I remember when you did not get to sit first chair in the orchestra and you were disappointed. But just like this Silver Medalist, you kept your head up and congratulated Jonathan, who narrowly edged you out. That made me really proud of you."

One last thing to keep in mind is the **Olympic motto** – "Citius, Altius, Fortius" – which translates to "Faster, Higher, Stronger." In our PCA workshops, we often ask athletes, "Why is this not 'Fastest, Highest, Strongest?'" The reason is that the Olympic spirit and the true nature of competition calls on athletes to give their own best personal performances. Many athletes enter the Olympic Games knowing they don't have a shot at the podium, but they still give their best personal performance. This is a huge lesson for our kids – in life, our focus should be on giving our own best personal performance – comparing ourselves to ourselves, not just to those around us.