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# Winning and Losing in Middle School Athletics

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# Winning and Losing in Middle School Athletics

## **Abstract**

"As Christians, children need to further understand that the outcome of the game does not define them and that they are called to respond in a way that brings glory to the Lord."

Posting about instilling a healthy view of competition at the middle school level from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/winning-and-losing-in-middle-school-athletics/>

## **Keywords**

In All Things, sports, athletes, coaches (athletics), middle school students

## **Disciplines**

Christianity | Sports Studies

## **Comments**

*In All Things* is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

# Winning and Losing in Middle School Athletics

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 [all in allthings.org/winning-and-losing-in-middle-school-athletics/](http://allthings.org/winning-and-losing-in-middle-school-athletics/)

Jeff Schouten

I have been fortunate to coach multiple sports on multiple levels during my teaching and coaching career which has encompassed age groups from middle school to college. Now as a parent of middle school students I have also been able to see how my sons have responded to winning and losing on the middle school level. On all levels I have been able to witness some great performances and have seen the enjoyment that players receive by working with others on a team. The outcomes of these games require the participants to understand the importance of reacting appropriately to both winning and losing.

## Reasons for Play

I have observed different reasons for middle school students to become involved with athletics. Some students have a deep desire to perform a certain sport and find enjoyment from being involved. Others may participate because of the urging of a parent or friend. And still others may not particularly enjoy the sport, but participate for the social fulfillment it may give him or her. Whatever the case maybe I feel it is important for parents to help their children understand their reasons for play and to understand how to handle winning and losing.

## Competition and its Impact on Winning and Losing

I am a firm believer that competition can help children learn how to respond positively to winning and losing. This view may contrast others' opinions on competition because it is a topic that often is looked at negatively. Media displays the overboard parent who gets too involved with a coach or a referee and stories are told of coaches handling winning or losing inappropriately. In both cases it often leads to the players copying the negative behavior or not finding enjoyment in the activity itself due to the behavior of those involved. But, what if we looked at the good things that come from competition and how it can help our middle school athletes?

Athletics and the ability to play are gifts from God. The dimension of play can look differently based on the situation. It could be playing a pick-up game of basketball in the driveway or a formalized middle school baseball game where standard rules and regulations are used. Either way the participants are playing the sport and competing against one another. The middle school example will produce a winner or loser to the game that is played. The pick-up game of basketball may or may not produce an outcome based on the choice made of its participants. Either way the players involved are competing against one another.

Winning or losing the contest is part of the formalized game and to take the competitive aspect out of it would diminish the nature of the contest. Both teams have a choice to make when the game is finished. Will the winning team brag or esteem themselves as "better" than the other team because of the outcome or will they be humble in victory and appreciate the effort of both teams? Will the losing team respond favorably by not getting upset and acknowledge they gave their best effort and be further motivated to perform at a higher level in their next game? As Christians, children need to further understand that the outcome of the game does not define them and that they are called to respond in a way that brings glory to the Lord. Being humble in wins and respectful in losses can go a long way in fostering the proper attitude toward competition that will hopefully lead to continued positive actions as middle school students grow older.

As middle school children continue to be involved in competitive contests it is important for coaches, parents, and administrators to further understand competition and how it can be a good component of play. We all can work together to make it an enjoyable experience for all involved whether it directly involves your child or the team you coach. We should recognize that we are created in the image of God and our ability to play and compete against one another are ways to bring glory to the Lord.