



**ON THE MOVE** *Yu Shing Ting*

# Keeping It Positive With Kids In Sports

**W**e all want our kids to succeed. But at what point are we pushing them too much?

I admit I've caught the Tiger Mom in me breaking free more than a few times with my boys for things like school and sports.

There's yelling, followed by an apology for hurting their feelings. I remember the first time I let loose. I lectured my son, who loves football, for not focusing during practice. I told him that if he wasn't going to take it seriously, then he was wasting everyone's time — his coaches, teammates and even me (as his chauffeur).

I always tell my kids that it's not about winning or getting an A, but it's trying their best, and I felt he wasn't. I could tell he didn't like what he was hearing. However, after that conversation, I must say there was a noticeable change in his effort and dedication.

But when is it too much? Does pushing them do more harm than good? I see it all the time. Parents screaming at their kids at the field, on the sidelines and in the bleachers.

According to Positive Coaching Alliance, people falsely believe that negative coaching is effective even when there is no data to suggest that abusive leadership improves outcomes. The national nonprofit aims to develop "Better Athletes, Better People" by working to provide a positive, character-building sports experience. It takes cutting-edge research from sports psychology, education and youth development to create actionable, easy-to-use resources to enable a trans-

formation to a positive sports culture where children thrive.

"I don't want to tell people how to parent, or what is right and what is wrong," says Major League Baseball all-star Shane Victorino. "At the end of the day, the chance of someone playing at the highest level is not very good, but it's how do they learn through the process of what is going on that makes them better.

"I was motivated differently. I was motivated by the negative (he once overheard a baseball scout telling his parents he would never play in the major leagues), by the coaches telling me I couldn't do it. So, it's hard for me to say because through my trials and tribulations, I learn that way and that drove me, and it still drives me today. Not so much the negative but the in-your-face challenge.

"But through the process, being there and being a parent is much greater than the end result of a game. You're talking to an individual who really might not, at the end of the day, go on to play sports, so what you're telling them and yelling at them is really going to stay with them in the bigger picture — not just as an athlete, but as a kid and that's the part where it's a juggling act. It's hard."

Victorino confesses to the struggle too. As a coach, as a parent, how do you instill in a child that, when you're challenged, you have the ability to step up and not hide in the corner? Turn the negative into a positive. "Ultimately, it's the chance of getting to learn," says Victorino. "Is it really important for you to hound the kid because he missed a



Positive Coaching Alliance founder/CEO Jim Thompson and Major League Baseball All-Star Shane Victorino  
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goal, because he struck out? Or is it important to know that, hey, next time we'll get them again. We'll be positive.

"You also can have some tough love too, but it's how you deliver it."

Victorino spoke at a Talk Story Breakfast at The Pacific Club Dec. 9 with Positive Coaching Alliance founder/CEO Jim Thompson. They discussed issues in sports today, such as good and bad examples set by coaches, parents and athletes from youth sports to college and pro sports.

"When I look at sports as a kid and now being an athlete, I think it's about what PAC is all about: positive," says Vic-

torino. "Teaching them values and what's important."

So, practice, game, season — it's not just about becoming a better athlete, but more importantly a better person. And you can achieve this through positive coaching, positive reinforcement and positive experiences on the field and off.

Through youth sports, we're not only creating memories but also lessons that last a lifetime. While there can only be one champion, positive coaches, parents and athletes are always winners. Tiger moms included.

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