Too Much Pressure Placed on Youngsters

A professional football player who once played for the late Vince Lombardi and the Washington Redskins said today that coaches of junior sports teams should put as much emphasis on the learning process as they do on the will to win.

Ken Barefoot, a tight end for the Washington Redskins in the late 1960's and now a real estate salesman for Duncan Realty, said:

"There are too many frustrated guys who read Lombardi's book on winning and then go out there and try to apply those techniques. You simply can't do it." -

Barefoot called attention to a famous Lombardi quote — "Winning isn't everything. It's the only thing" — and said:

"When you're talking to 10 and 11-year-olds, you can't do that.

Barefoot said he was not implying that a coach should not instill a winning spirit in a young boy and jokingly added, "Winning isn't everything, but it sure beats everything about coming in second."

Barefoot said the Lombardi philosophy of winning was more intended for the pay-for-play athletes — not youngsters.

"We're talking about people paid for winning — not 16-year-old kids," said Barefoot. "This is not a win-at-any-cost type thing. You're trying to do something besides win."

The thing you're trying to do, according to Barefoot, is to teach the youngster something about the sport in which he is engaged.

Barefoot is a believer in fundamentals and he said, "If you teach blocking and tackling properly, I feel like you can win. I feel like you can win by teaching fundamentals."

Barefoot should know. He is one of the most outstanding football players turned out in this area in years.

His first venture into organized sports was when he was in the seventh grade and started playing baseball. In the eighth grade, he started playing junior varsity sports and then went on to high school greatness.

He played on the Great Bridge High School football team, played for Virginia Polytechnic Institute and was a tight end for the Washington Redskins for a year and a half before playing briefly for the Detroit Lions.

His football career ended in 1970 when he was injured while playing for the Lions.

"I feel like I've gone the gamut in organized sports," said Barefoot, who hopes to get into coaching junior league football in Virginia Beach this year.

His only experience in junior league coaching was when he coached a basketball team while at VPI.

He has seen some of the local coaching in baseball this year, since his eight-year-old son, Ken, played in the Farm District Little League the past season.

"I was impressed with his coach," said Barefoot.

There are some junior league coaches that do not impress Barefoot. They are the ones who spend their time shouting at their players and urging them to win at all cost. They are the coaches who东南亚 need that kind of pressure," said Barefoot.

Barefoot said he would not let his sons play for a coach who disregarded the learning process and harangued players into winning at all cost.

The Issue:
Do you think too much emphasis is placed on winning in Va.

"Extremely so. So many coaches and parents alike forget that the boys are there for the enjoyment of playing and learning good sportsmanship. Too often the smaller boys who love to play and are confident on the court or in the classroom are being pressured to win by coaches and parents alike at the cost of the fun of the game."

"Yes, I think winning is overemphasized. It's fun to win but in the little leagues you supposed to train them for higher leagues. So you should play all the boys on the team for experience.

Ruth Murray

"Yes, my little brother plays on a team and all they think about is winning. The coaches always yell at the umpire or anything happens. But I also think that baseball is a game of kids not coaching. I can remember the coach of the other team tried to make me get four outs right against their team did. Our coach said no and let him have the run. But we still beat them. But, boy oh boy was the other coach mad. He was not showing sportsmanship at all. Our coach has the best sportsmanship of all of them. He doesn't start yelling over petty little things. If something was done wrong all he does is ask the umpire and whatever he says goes. So he leaves it at that. Most of the coaches just play for themselves and not the kids. They want everyone to think of him as a good coach."

John Lee Murphy Jr.

"No!! The word 'win' should be synonymous with success. Virtually all men and women whom society considers successful today have experienced the thrill of winning. That feeling of accomplishment that their extra efforts have been temporarily rewarded by being called the winner. This in itself is enough incentive for those who didn't quite make it to the winners circle this time to re-evaluate themselves and ask the question "why?" And the winners will try to remain winners not only on the ball field but in whatever he or she may undertake."

"While we (according to Mr. Kerr) do not understand the strategy, we do understand that without individual effort and the willingness to succeed, his strategy is about as good as a fool ball."

Kim Nill

"Junior Sports Programs" and without winning being at the smitl of their efforts it is not likely our youth will even come to the plate!"

"I want my kids to have the pressure of someone shouting and hollering at them," said Barefoot. "They don't get that at home. Winning is important, but so are the things that go with it."

Barefoot said he has pushed his sons into athletics and will let them make up their minds on what they want to do. This year's baseball for Ken was his first time in organized sports.

Barefoot's other son, Jason, 6, is still a little young for organized sports.

Although Barefoot does not push his sons into sports, they have more than a passing knowledge of what it is all about. Their father has been involved in sports for most of his life and they have been raised in a sports oriented atmosphere.

Their father wants to continue in sports — on a junior league level.

"I know it requires an awful lot of time, but I'd at least like to help somebody," said Barefoot. "I've got this knowledge of the game and I want to use it."

As for being a winning coach, Barefoot said, "I definitely feel I can go out and teach nothing but fundamentals and win."

Barefoot's letter to Dialogue is as follows:

"There are too many coaches who have had frustrated athletic careers and are now realizing a chance to win — at any cost. Winning will come naturally enough if the fundamentals and techniques of the particular sport are performed as awell as sportsmanship and character are stressed to our kids."

"My sons, 8 and 6 years, will not play for a coach who fails to have this conviction at the top of his priority list."

Dick Montgomery

"After reading dialogue, I can see why the old rule of playing every boy was removed. However, I still think it should be the coach's responsibility to see that each boy plays as much as possible. Parents don't pay their money to go and watch their boy sit on the bench every game. Most parents hope that their child will learn some important values by being a member of a team. You don't learn those values by being a member in name only and sitting through every game."

"As Dialogue pointed out, winning is important, but more important is the welfare and feelings of each boy on the team."

"Coaches please don't yield to the pressure of winning at the expense of the efforts it is not likely our youth will even come to the plate!"