



Growing Champions *for Life*

From Compliance to Commitment - A Team's Journey

By David Benzel

Derek Wolfe readily admits that during his early years of coaching baseball **he chose the role of intimidator**. "With the right posture and tone of voice a high school coach can intimidate any player and use threats to get the results he wants." Says Wolfe, "I just wanted the wins."

However he found the results weren't satisfying, the kids didn't respect him, and he didn't necessarily have winning seasons anyway.



Then he did the most courageous thing a coach can ever do. He changed his whole approach -- and now his program is the talk of the school. Players who once gave him compliance with some jogging now offer him commitment with their hustle.

Consider the average day of any child, age 5 to 18. He or she is evaluated and judged by teachers at school for their work, by friends for their clothing, by coaches and teammates for their performance...**and then they arrive home to be once again judged by their parents for a multitude of performance and behavioral issues.**

It's a world filled with the evaluating, and sometimes it feels like the "3 C's" - criticism, complaining, and condemning - that's all there is.

At the end of each week players were required to stand in front of their teammates and give a personalized answer to four questions.

1. How would you rate your attitude this week?
2. How would you rate your performance this week?
3. How was your progress and the help you received this week?
4. Did you receive enough repetitions on the skills you're trying to improve?

This fundamental change was a challenge because of the coaches' deeply ingrained habits of catching players doing something wrong, and the relentless harassment of players toward each other.

But over the season new attitudes replaced the old.

The focus on agreed upon standards, for example, 12 seconds on and off the field between innings, gained traction. In the end a team that had only three returning seniors won the District championship game and went on to the Regional tournament.

The parents and players of Trinity Prep High School in Orlando, Florida report that the baseball program produced for them the most rewarding experience they've ever had.

Several players, who never expected it, went on to play at Division 1 universities the following fall. Most importantly to Derek Wolfe, he knows he's much closer to achieving his real assignment as a coach -- building the character of young men so they can win at life, not just at sports.