

Follow Up to “What is Fun?”  
Anonymous

Shortly after my original article “What is Fun” hit the Prospects newsletter a parent made a comment in regards to his view. Simply stated, this parent did not agree with me. This parent felt it was about “fun” not satisfaction.

Ironically later that day that same parent makes a comment about taking his kids to public skating. He talks about working with his child and making him do drills until he gets it right. I have heard this from many parents over the last year.

The irony of the comment is that we should expect our kids to go to public skate to have fun. There is no structure, there are no rules, and there are no results. Kids go out and don't have to think, they don't have to perform, and they don't have to listen to someone telling them what to do. Kids just chase each other around, talk to their friends, and even their parents. This is where the kids should have “fun”. Kids should expect to go to public skate to play around on the ice. This is where the kids take the things they learn in the structured environment called hockey practice and use it to play tag or beat the other kids to the other end of the ice. If you think I am wrong just sit back and watch your kid the next time you go to public skate.

Is a kid going to be discouraged about playing hockey by going to hockey practice, where the expectation is structure and learning or by a parent taking his kid to public skate and making him do drills until he gets it right. I say the latter. If the kid is expected to do drills every time he steps on the ice I am very confident that kid will be less interested in hockey practice.

We as parents have a difficult job in teaching our kids to be adults. We want them to be responsible, we want them to put forth effort and we do want them to be successful in whatever our kids do. As I mentioned sports gives us the opportunity to teach them many lessons about life. We as parents must understand what our own expectations are first, and then be consistent in how we relay those expectations to our kids. I expect my kid to work hard at the Prospects, because that is how the program is structured. I expect my kid to have fun at public skate, because that is what I expect when we go. I do not see the logic of telling your kid to have fun at the Prospects but work his tail off at public skate.

It is critical that parents are consistent in their expectations. Primary to being consistent is having a REALISTIC view of your child's ability. If you think your child is better or worse than he actually is it is simply impossible to put that child in the right situation to develop.

How many players are playing AA when they should be playing house, how many players are playing AAA when they should be playing AA? How many parents were upset their kid did not make the Prospect tournament teams? There is not a parent I know who does not have a bias toward their own kids. We love them and we should be bias. We cannot let our bias get in the way of a realist assessment of our child's ability.

An unrealistic assessment will make things more difficult for you, your child, and surely the people you associate with at the rink. An unrealistic assessment will leads us to making poor decisions about where your child should play and what clinics they should go to. Most important it will be impossible to properly relay what our expectations are because the foundation of those expectations is unrealistic.