

Environmental effects on athletes

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Environmental Effects on Athletes Another way to explore how athletes are affected by different factors preventing or causing them to perform at their highest level is through their environment. Coaches, parents, peers, childhood, and even the media can manipulate athletes. A coach can get you out of your game by giving too much feedback or not any at all. Parents often put too much pressure on their child, making them either excel or, for others, burnout.

Starting sports at a young age can also have its benefits, like teaching healthy competition and life lessons. On the other hand, it can lead to more injuries in the long run or teach them unhealthy sportsmanship. For older athletes, it's the peers and media that can have a strong effect. Bad influences in the media and criticism from reporters can take over or overwhelm athletes and cause them not to reach their full potential. Athletes need a certain environment to perform to their optimum ability, through their childhood and even as they grow older.

The childhood of an athlete is the most important time to build the characteristics of a champion. Certain factors in an athlete's childhood can strongly determine not only if they are successful in sports, but also in life. A healthy environment can help children in their sports to “increase physical and mental health, learn healthy competition among peers and the sense of belonging gained by being part of a team” as Lucie Westminster, a psychology researcher and writer, says (Westminster 1).

Coaches and parents are key factors in creating this healthy environment. Giving kids praise for their performance can bring out desirable changes in behavior and promote responsibility. Anything as simple from a pat on the

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back, to a nod, can affect a growing athlete. According to research found by Westminister “ coaches who give positive reinforcement, provide effective feedback, and foster a caring climate provide the best developmental outcomes for children” (Westminister 2).

By providing a favorable outlook and always caring it is easier for children to grow up to excel and want to push themselves. Too much pressure or too little can cause children to grow up thinking sports don't matter or not want to push themselves to be champions. Coaches may just be thinking about winning but the characters in children's lives that nurture positive youth development will end up with children who succeed. If coaches and parents are supportive and connected in the right way they can create a champion.

On the other hand, there are many risks by introducing sports at a young age. The highly competitive and ' win at all costs' attitude at colleges and seen by professional athletes are starting to affect children too. Pushing kids too hard while they are young can lead to a greater risk of injury, unsportsmanlike behavior, or even cause them to burn out. According to Lucie Westminister “ Injuries such as tears of the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) occur more and more in young athletes due to the rigors of practice and competitions”(Westminister).

By starting younger, kids wear out their ligaments and joints faster making them more susceptible to injury. Children can also learn unsportsmanlike behavior by witnessing other players, parents, and even coaches. If kids aren't subjected to the right atmosphere, they will learn bad behavior, just like how Westminister explains “ Children learn behaviors by seeing another

person complete the same activity, and therefore witnessing these behaviors may lead the child to mimic these in similar situations” (Westminister).

Another negative effect of starting young is a child’s outlook of undue pressure. This negative and high-pressure world we now live in is causing more and more athletes to burn out. If the athlete feels too much pressure or that he or she is not receiving the right feedback it can cause him or her to stress out and no matter how successful, hate the sport they’re in. Family and coaches can prevent a champion from being made through undue pressure. The environment around a child in sports can be a negative impact on their life, unless the right steps are made.

As kids grow older media and peers play a more influential role on determining if they will be a champion or not. Television, movies, magazines, video games, the Internet, all have effects on athletes just like how Wayne Wilson found “ 94% of U. S. children ages 8 to 17 watch, read about, or listen to sports using one form of media”(Wilson 6). Athletic performance is strongly reduced by distractions, which can arise from peers, unexpected high performance, media, criticism and plenty more.

Newspapers, paparazzi, reporters, and even fans can all alter the performance of an athlete through public forums in the media. Many athletes are the targets of the media, always being critiqued and dissected, like Miki Ando. The constant and negative publicity of her figure skating performances caused Ando to struggle in 2005 and 2006, almost missing her opportunity in the 2006 Olympics. The only way to stay out of the media is to do nothing just as Wilson states “ Mediocre people play it safe and avoid criticism at all costs. Champions risk criticism every time they perform”(Wilson 15).

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Professional athletes are always facing criticism, but with the right mentality, champions can be made. From childhood to adulthood athletes are always facing obstacles in the way of their dreams. Children must face the pressure from their parents, coaches, or any influential adults around them. In order for kids to gain the mentality of a champion and learn life-long lessons, they must engage in the right environment. Throughout high school and college, athletes deal with the media attacking or praising them, along with parents and coaches.

Friends and video games also come as a distraction, either giving them the wrong ideas or leading them down the wrong path. Distractions are everywhere preventing athletes from achieving their dreams, but in the right environment, they can become a champion. Works Cited Westminister, Lucie. " Children in Sports. " Healthy Living Today N. p. , 29 June 2012. Web. 2 April 2013. Wilson, Wayne. Children and Sports Media. Los Angelos, CA: Amateur Athletic Foundation, 1999. Print.