

Should Everyone Get a Trophy?

These days, you can get a trophy just for showing up. **BY LAUREN TARSHIS**

Walk into the bedroom of 12-year-old Lucas, a sixth-grader from New Jersey, and you might think you've accidentally stumbled into a sports hall of fame. There are awards everywhere: Little League trophies are lined up along his bookshelves, basketball trophies crowd his dresser, soccer medals dangle from ribbons on his bulletin board.

On the floor there is even a bronze-colored football trophy, which Lucas uses to keep his door from slamming shut.

Trophies for All

Lucas admits that he didn't exactly earn these trophies for his athletic prowess. "I'm actually not so good at sports," he says. Like many kids in sports programs, Lucas got his trophies for simply showing up to practices and games.

"This has become practically

a universal policy in many communities," says Karen Coffin, a coach who writes about youth sports.

The "trophies for all" policy is part of a bigger change that has swept youth sports over the past two decades. Back when your parents were learning how to swing a bat, team life could be brutal. Then, coaches often openly favored star athletes. Less-gifted

players would spend entire games sitting on the bench. Today, rules in many leagues require equal playing time for all team members. "The focus isn't on winning," says Coffin. "It's about building skills."

A Welcome Change

This is a welcome change for many. More kids than ever are playing a variety of team sports. Coaches are encouraged to support



everyone on their teams, not just the future LeBrons. “The idea is to motivate kids to play sports, to have fun,” says Dr. Michelle Anthony, an author and psychologist who works with kids and schools.

Studies show many benefits for kids who stick with team sports, from higher fitness levels to better grades. Getting trophies can encourage young athletes to continue playing even if they are not superstars. No one feels overlooked.

The Wrong Message?

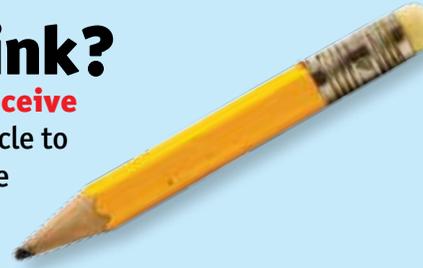
But some experts suggest that giving trophies to everyone sends the wrong message. In life, most people are not rewarded for simply doing what’s required. A student doesn’t get an A just for going to class. An employee doesn’t get a raise just for arriving to work on time. Shouldn’t only the hardest-working or highest-performing athletes get the accolades?

Both Coffin and Anthony point out that trophies can lose their meaning when everyone gets one. Coffin also emphasizes that trophies are not an effective way for coaches to motivate players. “Receiving a pat on the back, a thumbs-up from the coach . . . any show of appreciation is what keeps kids coming back,” she says.

As for Lucas, he sees both sides of the debate. He says that getting trophies *has* made him feel good about being on his teams. He confesses that there is a problem, though: “I’m out of space.” ●

What Do You Think?

Should all kids on sports teams receive trophies? Use evidence from the article to support each side of this debate. Write the information on the lines below.



YES

TROPHIES FOR ALL!

1 Trophies can encourage kids who aren't great athletes to keep playing.

2

3

NO

REWARD ONLY THE BEST!

1

2

3

EXAMINE POINTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE—AS WELL AS YOUR OWN BELIEFS—and decide if all kid athletes should receive an award just for participating. State your opinion in one sentence below. This can become the thesis statement for an argument essay.

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