



## Parent/Guardian Letter

As a coach, I am committed to the principles of Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) and against a “win-at-all-cost” mentality. I aim to be a positive coach who strives to develop competitors while also helping my athletes develop the life skills that can be developed through sports. I hope you will help me by reinforcing three principles:

### **The ELM Tree of Mastery | Filling Emotional Tanks | Honoring the Game**

Here are some details on these principles.

#### **The ELM Tree of Mastery**

While winning is important and learning to compete is one of the major life lessons available through sports, not everyone can win every game. Still, youth athletes are winners, regardless of what the scoreboard says, when they pursue mastery of their sports. As a way to remember key elements of mastery, PCA uses the acronym **ELM for Effort, Learning and Mistakes are OK**.

Youth athletes who keep these things in mind develop habits that will serve them well throughout their lives. As an added benefit, athletes who are coached toward Mastery tend to have reduced anxiety and increased self-confidence, because they focus on things they can control. Therefore, they are more likely to have fun and perform better. Here's how you can help:

- Tell your children it's OK to make a mistake.
- Tell them you appreciate their best effort even if they fall short of the desired result.
- Recognize that Mastery is hard work and an ongoing process over time that can fuel great conversations with your children about sports and life.

#### **Filling Emotional Tanks**

An “Emotional Tank” is like the gas tank in a car. When it's empty, we go nowhere, but when it's full, we can go most anywhere. The best fuel for an Emotional Tank is an average of **five specific, truthful praises for each specific, constructive criticism**. Here's how you can help:

- Encourage your children with specific tank-fillers regardless of scoreboard results. Be honest, but remember the value of that 5:1 ratio.
- Avoid an immediate and critical debrief right after the game.

#### **Honoring the Game**

To help remember the ideals of sportsmanship, which PCA calls “honoring the game”, we talk about behaving respectfully to all involved in the sport - the Rules of competition, Officials, Opponents, Teammates, and Self. Here's how you can help:

- Review ROOTS with your children (you can learn more about the meaning of each letter by visiting PCA's website at [www.positivecoach.org](http://www.positivecoach.org)).
- Model Honoring the Game yourself as you watch your children compete and even as you watch sports on TV together.
- Encourage other spectators to Honor the Game.