Sport and Responsible Leadership Among Youth

By Don Hellison, Tom Martinek and Dave Welsh

The reason that I chose this article to be a part of my main topic Youth Leadership is because it not only touches on youth leadership, but it involves leadership in sports as well. My entire childhood I was involved in sports and leadership. I feel like I got my main leadership skills from being on sport teams all year long. This article focuses on youth development in the United States with an emphasis on preparing youth for leadership, then evaluating their leadership growth, and what it looks like to go beyond youth leadership.

There are three very important recommendations that Peter Benson has come up with for developing leadership programs for youth. They are:

“1. Enhance social competencies, including friendship-making skills, caring skills, assertive and resistance skills.
2. Emphasize the development of positive values, particularly those that engender a sense of social responsibility for the welfare of others.
3. Place high priority on including opportunities that help others and allow for personal reflection on the meaning of help.” (52)

These were relevant because all three of these ways will increase the leadership in our youth. I believe that when a youth has these skills, they will be able to communicate effectively, be motivated to succeed in their goals, and lead a group to succeed.

The next step is to prepare these young people to be leaders. According to the reading, they had four essential levels of empowerment that need to be applied to make a young leader evolve. These levels are:

“Level one: Provide leaders an open forum to share ideas.
Level two: Give choices to leaders about program content, with whom to work, and how the program should run. 
Level three: Include peer teaching where decisions and actions affect fellow club members. 
Level four: Provide opportunities for cross-age teaching where they teach younger children sport skills and responsibility values.” (54)

All of these levels allow youth to take control of their own future. I think that the four levels that they are set high standard for these leaders and gives them the chance to increase their capabilities.

I believe that this article was well worth the read because the authors made a valid argument. The importance of youth leadership is key if we want our youth to succeed and I believe that these steps will not only do just that but will leave a mark for all programs involving youth to do the same.