

# The Woodbury Soccer Club

## SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

by Jim Thompson, Thursday, Jan 8, 2009 3:00 PM ET

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I have long been a fan of "The Family Circus" comic strip. Perhaps my favorite strip of all time features the family dog barking up a storm in the middle of the night. Dad, irritated that he's been awakened from a much-needed sleep, clomps down the stairs to yell at Barfy, who dutifully hangs his head. Dad climbs back up the stairs while the cartoonist has a surprise for us. He pans back so we see in the far corner of the yard a burglar retreating.

We who see the "Big Picture" know Barfy has protected his family from a burglary. The dad, seeing only the "Little Picture," is angry at being disturbed.

This comic strip can serve as a metaphor for youth sports. Youth coaches and parents are often overwhelmed by so many Little Pictures filled with barking dogs that they miss the Big Picture entirely. How our children do in any given sporting event is Little Picture. Whether they win or lose, play well or badly, laugh or whine after the game - all Little Picture.

What children take away from youth sports to help them become successful, contributing members of society is the Big Picture. Whether they remain physically active throughout life, learn to bounce back from difficulties with renewed determination, discover how to support other people within a team context - these are the Big Picture.

**THE BIG PICTURE AND YOU.** This book\* describes a model of sports parenting that focuses relentlessly on the Big Picture. We call it the Second-Goal Parent.

There are two broad goals in youth sports: striving to win and building character so kids develop into successful, contributing members of society.

As important as winning is, Second-Goal Parents let coaches and athletes worry about the first goal of scoreboard results. Second-Goal Parents have a much more important role to play: ensuring their children take away from sports lessons that will help them be successful in life. Remember, that is the Big Picture. And attending to this is much more vital than being an extraneous backseat coach.

Now, there is nothing wrong with caring about whether your child's team wins or loses. Go ahead and care about it! Likewise, there's nothing wrong with giving pointers when your child asks for them.

But the lifelong impact you can have - that no one else can in quite the way you can -

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is on the life lessons your child takes away from the sports experience. No one can be there for your child in this way better than you. No one.

If you embrace your role as a Second-Goal Parent, it will transform the way you see youth sports. It will help you seize the teachable moments that will come your way again and again because you are looking for them.

What might have seemed like a disappointing loss or a failure by your child becomes an opportunity to reinforce resiliency. A tough competition in forbiddingly hot, cold, or nasty weather can prompt a conversation with your child about learning to enjoy challenges. Whether your child succeeds or fails on the playing field, you will be able to use the experiences to reinforce the kind of person you want him or her to be.

*\*(Excerpted from "Positive Sports Parenting: How 'Second-Goal' Parents Build Winners in Life Through Sports," the fifth book by **Jim Thompson**. It is available for \$8.95 at [www.positivecoach.org/store](http://www.positivecoach.org/store) . Thompson is the founder of the Positive Coaching Alliance.)*

