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Fourth Edition

SECTION: ROP ZONE; Sports; Pg. C9

HEADLINE: Words of wisdom from a youth-sports guru;
Sideline Smitty - Q & A - Advice for parents, coaches, athletes

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About every six months, I make a pilgrimage to Camano Island to see a very wise man.

Bruce Brown is a national speaker on the subject of kids and sports and team dynamics.

The Richland native and Washington State grad has more than 30 years of coaching experience in a variety of sports, from junior high to the college level.

Brown recently published his 10th booklet, "Four Keys to a Successful Season" (\$5, ProActive Coaching) and it is targeted at well-meaning parents who find themselves coaching nonschool youth teams. It's about the smartest \$5 investment a volunteer coach can make.

Brown's Web site is www.proactivecoaching.info and there's a link to it at www.WIAA.com.

Because this column is geared toward high-school sports, I'm going to pass along some of Bruce Brown's wisdom pertinent to prep teams I collected while sitting in his kitchen, from his publications or from some of his appearances I have attended:

? "The only rule I ever had in 30 years of coaching was this: 'Don't let your teammates down.' That means on the court, off the court, on weekends and in the classroom."

? "The only guarantee about every sports season is that it isn't going to be perfect. There are always going to be issues with some relationships on the team and playing time."

? "I think what most young people need to walk through life confidently is at least one person inside their family who loves them unconditionally and one person outside their family who loves them or believes in them unconditionally ... For a lot of people, that person is a teacher or a coach."

? "There are appropriate and inappropriate subjects that a parent can discuss with a

coach. Appropriate ones are mental and physical treatment of the child, ways to help the child improve and the child's behavior. Inappropriate ones are playing time, strategy and other team members."

? "If a coach doesn't confront any behaviors that are not acceptable to him, he is sending a message of acceptance."

? "If a kid enters your program with the wrong behaviors, wrong perceptions, and wrong actions, that's because other people didn't do their job. If the kid exits your program still with the wrong behaviors, wrong perceptions and wrong actions, then coach, it's on your shoulders."

? "I call some talented but uncommitted athletes 'selective participants.' They normally are your most talented kids, but along the way coaches have let them think, 'I deserve special treatment.' They choose when they are going to listen and when they tune out. They are absorbed with their own performance. They are energy-sappers and they are team killers ... I don't have many 'nevers' in my life but there is one: 'You'll never see a great team where the most talented players aren't the best workers.' It's as simple as that."

? "There are two kinds of mistakes and coaches need to differentiate between them. There are mistakes made carelessly with a lack of attention, and there are mistakes made with full effort and full concentration. Full-effort, full-attention mistakes shouldn't be penalized."

? "As a coach, I found that whatever I rewarded, I got. When I was coaching basketball, I would give my players one point on their game grades if they stopped a dribble and three points if they forced the opponent to stop dribbling and turn his back to the basket."

? "Anything you can do to improve the character of your individual athletes or team gives you a better chance for success in every way including the scoreboard."

? "Never forget that a student doesn't have to be good at a sport to get good out of participating in the sport."

? "I think my best coaching years were my last ones. I think that as a coach you continue to get better ... You can't coach for more than a week and get in your car and you say, 'I wish I could rewind the tape. I wish I hadn't said that. I wish I hadn't done that. I wish I hadn't reacted that way.' ... As you get older, you stop and think before you react."

Have a question about high-school sports? Craig Smith will find the answer every Tuesday in The Times. Ask your question in one of the following ways: Voice mail (206-464-8279), snail mail (Craig Smith, Seattle Times Sports, P.O. Box 70, Seattle, WA 98111) or e-mail csmith@seattletimes.com