

Dear Parents, Spectators, and Coaches,

As you find your spot on the sideline or in the stands — cheering for your child or leading your team — I want to share a few thoughts straight from my heart.

1. Remember, they're just kids.

Even the 8th graders — they're still kids learning, growing and figuring things out. Time goes by so fast. My own daughter is 10 now, and it feels like just yesterday I was pushing her around the walking track at the soccer park in her stroller. I remember many of your kids participating in T-Ball — those megaphone interviews, the slides, playing in the dirt and all the fun we had. Such fun times when we didn't worry about the score — we just wanted the kids to have fun. We can keep score without letting it define the day; it can still be about fun, learning and making memories together.

These moments on the field will pass quickly, but the example we set will last. The way we speak, how we react, and how we make our kids feel will stay with them long after the final whistle. When things don't go our way, I hope our words are ones of encouragement, not frustration or anger. Our kids won't remember the scores years from now, but they'll always remember how we handled ourselves and how we treated them.

2. Be patient with the referees.

Many of our referees are teenagers — some brand new this season, stepping in for those who've gone on to high school sports or college. They're learning, growing and doing their best — and I couldn't be prouder of them. Most of these young people grew up playing YMCA sports themselves. I remember when many of them were little, some even in strollers on these same fields. Now they're giving back — learning responsibility, leadership and confidence through officiating. For most, it's their very first job.

These referees are really like my own kids, and I treat them, protect them and support them as a father would. They won't get every call right — none of us do. Yet so often, we expect perfection from others while failing to recognize our own imperfections. Every game is part of their learning process, just as every mistake is part of ours. And truthfully, some of your children may be wearing those referee shirts in the near future. When that time comes, I hope they'll be met with the same patience, kindness and understanding we would hope for our own kids stepping into new roles. When we extend grace, we're not only helping them grow — we're showing our kids what true respect and character look like.

3. It's just a game — enjoy it.

Celebrate the chance your child has to play, to learn, and to compete. If they win, celebrate their joy. If they lose, remind them that effort, teamwork, and attitude matter far more than the scoreboard.

And here's the big one — **never make excuses**. Not for yourself, not for your kids, not for the refs, not for anyone. Life's not about pointing fingers or blaming the calls we don't like. It's about owning it, learning from it and showing up better the next time. That's how character's built, that's how respect's earned and that's how we win at the game of life — no scoreboard required.

Most of you already live out this message, and I'm grateful for the example you set. But it never hurts to pause and remind ourselves why we're here — to help kids grow, build confidence and feel supported. **How we handle the tough moments (especially when things don't go our way or the way**

we think they should) genuinely defines who we are and says more about us than any words ever could. And for those times we mess up — and we all do — it's how we respond, own it and try again that truly matters.

Some of you may not agree with everything I say — and that's fine. But this is the culture we've been building here at the Greene County YMCA, and this is my mission: to provide a space where kids can learn, grow and have fun while we model the character values that guide us every day — **respect, accountability, kindness, and honesty**. If you play here, these are the values we live by. We're not changing that — not as a rule, but as a promise to our kids and to each other. This is how we help them grow, feel safe and understand what true character looks like.

To close, I want to leave you with two reminders that guide me every day:

First, one of my favorite Ted Lasso-inspired quotes:

“May we not be judged by our actions in our weakest moments, but rather by the strength we show when and if we're ever given the chance at redemption.”

And second, a simple but powerful truth:

“Sports do not build character. They reveal it.”

That truth doesn't just apply to the kids on the field — it applies to all of us. Every game, every call, every moment of frustration, anger or joy reveals something about who we are and what we value. My hope is that what others see in us — coaches, parents, players and referees alike — is patience, kindness, integrity and grace. That's the kind of character that truly lasts.

If you enjoyed this message, or if it resonated with you, I hope you'll share it with someone who might need to hear it.

For the kids,

Danny L. Silvers

“Sports do not build character. They reveal it.”