

The Cup and 'Sportmanship'

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The World Cup of soccer to be played in Brazil is kicking off. I wish to use this opportunity to start a reflection on sports and children. The Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) believes sport activities must be part of a healthy lifestyle to be taught to our children so that they grow up good athletes and good members of society.

Plenty is taught to our children on techniques and smarts of the various sports disciplines they engage in—from soccer to basketball, from baseball to cycling or swimming—but they are not instructed well enough on what we call “sportsmanship.”

This concept, which is at the core of the Olympic Movement, holds that sport and physical activities can play a crucial role in giving our children self esteem, gratification, and in teaching them to interact with other children in a jovial environment. Teaching sportmanship to children also involves explaining how a proper diet, with healthy food and products appropriate for their age will make them grow into adulthood as free as possible of medical complications, emergency visits to the hospitals, lost days at school.



Right now, regardless of the sport they love most they have soccer in their minds as they are going to be single-mindedly focused on the World Cup. Like an enormous chunk of the world population, our children will be lifted to high emotions watching the sparkling dancing of young players on the green grass of 12 Brazilian fields of dreams. Few of the 32 countries that are taking part in the finals of the World Cup have already set their eyes on the players who will travel to Brazil. Germany for instance, whose national team coach is Joachim Löw, and the host country of Brazil, where their national "mister" Luiz Felipe Scolari has already selected its final team roster of 23 players.

So let's use the World Cup and all the interest it will rise as a great opportunity to introduce our children to sportmanship. This is the right moment to do so.

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