

Positive Coaching Alliance Launches Seal of Commitment Campaign

Those of us who have reached a certain age remember the “Look for the Union Label” ad campaign. Now, Positive Coaching Alliance has launched its version, urging youth sports parents and athletes to look and ask for the PCA Seal of Commitment.

Schools and youth sports organizations bearing the Seal on their websites, flyers and print ads are formally committed to providing all their athletes a Double-Goal Coach™. They have signed a pledge to mandate Double-Goal Coach training for all their coaches, earning a suite of PCA-provided promotional materials that will help distinguish their programs.

“The PCA Seal of Commitment program is our most important step yet toward our BHAG (‘big, hairy, audacious goal’) of training and certifying one million Double-Goal Coaches in the next decade,” said PCA Founder and Executive Director Jim Thompson. “Our Seal of Commitment partners will help us reach both our quantitative goal and achieve the qualitative mission of transforming youth sports so sports can transform youth. These partners are moving our social epidemic to a new level.”

Even before the launch of the Seal of Commitment several partners implemented Double-Goal Coaching particularly aggressively within the past year. For example, Central Texas Youth Football made certification mandatory. “We’d learned some bad habits from the coaches we’d had as youths,” said Charles Bergh, league president. “The philosophy behind PCA refocuses what we’re trying to do with youth sports. I saw big change in our coaches this year, but if this had not been mandatory, it would be like going into a football game with 11 players who know the plays and 11 who don’t.



EVERY COACH A DOUBLE-GOAL COACH™

For next season, we’re making it mandatory for coaches to read *Positive Coaching*.”

California’s Peninsula Parish School League took a further step, requiring at least one parent of each youth athlete to attend PCA’s Parent Workshop. “There was a little bit of grumbling,” recalled Rita Carroll, principal of St. Pius School. “But I think every school is 99 percent compliant. People were called and told their kids couldn’t play, and those parents got to a workshop. Everyone realizes it’s for the kids.”

PCA launches its program with 12 partners having already earned the Seal. Many shared their reasons for pursuing the Seal of Commitment, none more eloquently than Tom Archie, president of Pomperaug Lacrosse, which serves more than 150 players in Southbury, Middlebury, Woodbury and Oxford, Conn. “You know the old saying about involvement and commitment. In a breakfast of bacon and eggs, the chicken is involved, but the pig is committed. This sends a message to the kids that you’re really committed. Kids pick up on everything. They know whether or not you’re committed.”

As with any true commitment, difficulties can arise. Confronting them requires the moral courage to insist on positive change, such as that exhibited by Ted Gott, athletic director at Southern High School in



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Tom Archie, president, Pomperaug (CT) Lacrosse, with wife and former league co-president Lisa

Harwood, MD. Several of Southern's 40 coaches showed reluctance to participate. "They were saying, 'I've been coaching for years. I know what I'm doing.' I made it clear that this is the direction we're going, and if you don't want to, we'll have to find someone else. When they saw the tools PCA provides, they realized PCA was going to help.

"The Seal shows that we're all on-board, that it's something we're doing as a school. It lets everyone know where we are and what to expect if your son or daughter is in our program. Having something to display shows we're committed as an organization and that this is not just something that I want."

Added Inga Johnson, president of Rancho Cotati (CA) Little League: "We have a few negative coaches, but by making this a group thing, we're not singling them out. We're just telling everyone at once that this is how we want to do things."

"Making Double-Goal Coaching mandatory will weed out coaches who don't want to comply with the standards of PCA and Agoura Pony Baseball," said Mark Smith, the league's Pinto A Division director and PCA liaison. "If everybody buys into it,

that impacts the whole league and leads to kids who want to come back next year."

Of course, the Seal sends a message not just to coaches, but also to other constituencies. "The Seal will make a difference," said Jason Yates, program developer for Ringwood (NJ) Lacrosse. "It makes our program more attractive to parents. Mandatory Double-Goal Coach certification is in our bylaws, and parents know it and like it."

"Parents, coaches and the community as a whole will see that we care about children," added Todd Branon, training director for Morgan Hill (CA) Pony Baseball. "This will raise the levels of participation in our program and the quality of play."

The Seal also can aid organizations in their relationships with civic leaders and government. "This shows the city where we're headed," said Bob Cook, president of San Carlos (CA) Little League. "All coaches in our league must take some course of training, per our contract with the city, and we chose PCA."

Finally, the Seal ensures consistency in coaching methods and values throughout an organization. "We've got everyone talk-

ing the same talk and walking the same walk," said Tom Cecola, director of adult education and training for Bolingbrook (IL) Soccer Club, which serves nearly 1,000 Chicago-area players. "By adopting this program, we're taking our club to another level. We're not the only sports club in the area. When parents see this, they should think, 'How can Bolingbrook T-Ball or basketball or volleyball get involved?'"

That's the kind of social-epidemic spreading PCA needs to achieve its goals and help parents and children reach theirs.

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Ted Gott

Athletic Director, Southern High School, MD

Positive Coaching Alliance salutes these initial Seal of Commitment recipients:

Agoura Pony Baseball, Agoura Hills, CA
Bolingbrook Soccer Club, Bolingbrook, IL
Foster City Little League, Foster City, CA
Morgan Hill Pony Baseball, Morgan Hill, CA
Pilsen Athletic Conference, Chicago, IL
Pomperaug Lacrosse, Southbury, CT
Ringwood Lacrosse, Ringwood, NJ
Rancho Cotati Little League, Rancho Cotati, CA
San Carlos Little League, San Carlos, CA
Southern High School, Harwood, MD
Tri-City Little League, Rocklin, CA
Woodland Little League, Woodland, CA

PCA Partners earn the Seal of Commitment by pledging in writing that:

- All coaches in the school or organization will be trained and certified as Double-Goal Coaches
- Organizational leaders will inform parents of the commitment
- All coaches will receive a copy of the Double-Goal Coach Job Description
- A PCA banner will be displayed at all games and other appropriate functions.

