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THE HILLIER VIEW

Kevin Hillier says it's time to be more relaxed about kids' sport

Everyone knows I love sport but I'm genuinely worried about where sport is heading in a lot of different areas. I bring this topic to the table as a parent and a sports lover, as it seems to me we're building elite programs from too young an age. High schools are now set up as starting points to identify children with potential to be elite sportspeople if given the right guidance and training. Isn't this exactly what we criticised eastern European countries about in the sixties and seventies?

It's a win-at-all-costs mentality, or using the Essendon model and mission statement, Whatever it Takes. Stop already. Can we ever get back to allowing kids to just love sport, just loving being out there and just having fun without having to be the best? We aren't all winners. Never have been, never will be. That's a fact of life and one we all need to acknowledge.

I'm not emotionally scarred because I didn't win every game of footy or cricket I played in. I'm better for the experience of being on both sides of the results. I learnt just as much from

the losses as the wins, that it was part of being a team and that it wasn't all about me. God knows, this generation could do well to embrace that concept. The most gifted individuals will eventually rise to the top anyway.

Do we really need to be putting 12-year-olds into elite squads and monitoring their diets and training programs? My 10-year-old wants to be a professional footballer (soccer or AFL) but I just want him to enjoy the game. The chances he will reach the elite bracket are minimal and while I'd never crush his dream, I want him to get joy from having a go and being part of a team.

We're losing the pure enjoyment of sport because we're buying into the 'sport is business' model. It is business for some, but at the grassroots level it should still be about fun and exercise and sharing moments and experiences with your mates. They're things money can't buy and I'm sure you, like me, have memories of games, people, opponents and winning and losing that will last a lifetime. ■

If you have any news or events, let me know at kevin@howdypartnersmedia.com.au



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Briefs

Pool, spa safety plea

Wyndham council is reminding residents of safety precautions needed for pools and spas. Both permanent and temporary pools with more than 30 centimetres of water need proper barriers. Pool owners who do not have adequate safety barriers risk being fined. For more information about the precautions needed, phone Wyndham's building department on 9742 0777.

Brekkie clubs to start the day

The state government has joined with Foodbank to fund 173 breakfast clubs across the state. A further 327 will start later this year. The clubs provide breakfast to students who often begin their day without a meal. The program includes Wyndham Park Primary School and Manorvale Primary School.

Recycling pulls into station

Five recycling bins at Station Place in Werribee have been installed in a bid to divert recyclables from landfill and reduce littering. The council is preparing a new waste and litter strategy that will include a range of initiatives including public place recycling. To provide feedback, visit: www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/aboutwyndham/consultation

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