

# Sport - blessing or a curse?

MARTIE DU PLESSIS with JANNIE PUTTER reminds us of the importance to show our children how to deal with life...



Many people reach the highest point in life to just lay it down again, with only a reminder in an album, a medal and a few trophies to show for what they have accomplished. Some people have reached this highest point and have used the lessons they have learnt in life to change lives. One such person is Jannie Putter. He brings hope and deliverance to many through his motivational talks, books and sessions with families. Jannie and his family, also a home educating family, live in Centurion and the biggest lesson I have learnt from them, is that we need our bodies to be healthy for the destiny God has for our lives. I also learnt that to do our spiritual task on earth, we need to nurture and exercise our bodies to carry ourselves through difficult times.

Jannie has agreed to give guidance in this article to families with regards to sport.

*"Sport – a perfect place to achieve success, a platform to build identity and an opportunity to develop character!"*

Sport has been, and will forever be, a magnificent way of expressing oneself in life, a magnificent way of growing in wisdom regarding relationships, and a great way of learning to cope with the "curve-balls" life will inevitably throw at all of us!

Sport participation unquestionably plays a major part in the development of a child's personality, self-image, self-confidence, acceptance amongst peers, mental toughness, willingness to accept risks, interpersonal relationships, ability to communicate and leadership development, to name a few.

Yet – there is another side to this! Sport participation can also have a disastrous impact in a child's life regarding the exact same list of life-values!

We need to understand that it is not about sport itself, but it is really about a person's (child's) interpretation about the experiences he / she has in sport.

John 5: 19...; *"And Jesus answered them by saying; I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, the Son is able to do nothing of Himself (of his own accord); but He is able to do only what he SEES the Father doing, for whatever the Father does is what the Son does in the same way (in His turn)."*

How do we ensure that our children do not become another statistic as a "drop-out", "a quitter" or "a burn-out"? How do we keep a balance between pressure, discipline, commitment, fun, enthusiasm and accomplishments? We all need some guidance regarding these matters. We become so intensely involved

in our children's lives that we often lose perspective of the eventual outcomes we steer our children to...

I recall the following scene in our home: My wife, son and daughter were sitting in the bath while I sat next to them chatting. My wife got out and put on her "make-up" while I got into the bath with my children. After a while they got out and got dressed. At this point, my son always did the same thing. He came and stood next to the bath, dressed in his pyjamas, and "jokingly" challenged me: "Dad – I am going to jump into the bath with my pyjamas on!" I would sit back and say: "Go for it boy." He thoroughly enjoyed the fact that I dared him, but he never once jumped in...

I was giving a talk one day and suddenly this revelation hit me. I realized that I challenged my son but I never showed him how...! I could not wait to get back home that evening.

As it happened we found ourselves in a similar position in the bathroom. As my wife got out I did what my son always did - I stood there with my clothes on and said, "I am going to jump into the bath with my clothes on". He sat back like I always did and said: "Go for it Dad!" And then I did! He was amazed, astonished and... excited because for the first time he really had the freedom to know that he could too. Needless to say what happened after that!

I came to the realisation that I can never expect my child to behave in a certain way unless I am willing to show him how I do it! So often we, as parents, expect our children to behave like champions on the sporting field or in school, yet we turn a blind eye regarding how we deal with similar situations in life (situations of pressure, of making mistakes, of dealing with people).

The truth about sport is that there are a vast number of casualties next to the road – many more than necessary! The reason for this lies in things like bad coaching, winning at all costs, ridiculous competition amongst parents, over-training, intense pressure, irrational expectations from parents, peers and eventually oneself and the media who really "make" or "break" people.

We need to show our children how to deal with life.  
"Nothing has meaning except the meaning we give to it..."

Faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, the title deed of the things not yet seen... (Hebrews 11). Taking part in sport is really a place to practise discipline in faith... Not faith in results, but in faith in God's Word! The scripture I refer to here is Romans 8: 28 ["We are assured and know that ALL things work together for and are for good to and for those who love God"].

## V EDUCATION

In the more than fifteen years that I have been practising as mental coach, I have dealt with a great number of athletes and people from all spheres of life. One thing that I am sure of is this: *"More of us suffer not because of the wrong things that we do (sin), but because we don't do the right things!"* People have great and admirable dreams and they are committed to these up to a point. I would like to name this point: *"FAITH"*. More people live lives of being realistic (believing what they see) rather than engaging in the amazing adventure of living by faith (believing and being sure of the things that are not seen yet!).

I worked as the mental coach for the Blue Bulls from 2006 until 2010. My major job was to get players that are not chosen for a specific game not to give up their belief in themselves because a coach selected another player.

Principles like patience, forgiveness, discipline, excellence, joy, empowerment, servant-hood and leadership which need to be learned during these processes are often lost because of a lack of faith (because we are so realistic).

What is point I want to make? We, as parents have a job to do - not to tell our children how to act, but to show them how to act! We have to show them how WE dream, how WE commit ourselves to things, how WE are willing to take risks and how WE react when we experience failure or success. We cannot protect our children against the "curve-balls" (wrong coaching, bad calls, ridicule, pressure etc.) they will inevitably face in taking part in sport and life, but we should rather show and coach our children how to

deal with the "curve-balls" in life. We need to SHOW our children how we live our own lives based upon the principles of faith. Sport simply provides us with ample opportunities to have constant victory (through faith)!

My personal philosophy about life and competition:

*I always win*

*However – if you succeed in beating me in the race or the match  
I will congratulate you for you have just beaten a true champion  
- me*

*However - I did not lose (as many others will think) – you simply  
won (the game)*

*Whilst I have won experience which I will use tomorrow  
When we challenge each other...*

Be the example you want your kids to see. Free them to make mistakes without losing your love or your acceptance and remember – winning or losing is a mindset – not a result! **V**

Schools, churches and companies can contact Jannie Putter directly. Jannie travels to different areas in the country and his book is available in both Afrikaans and English.

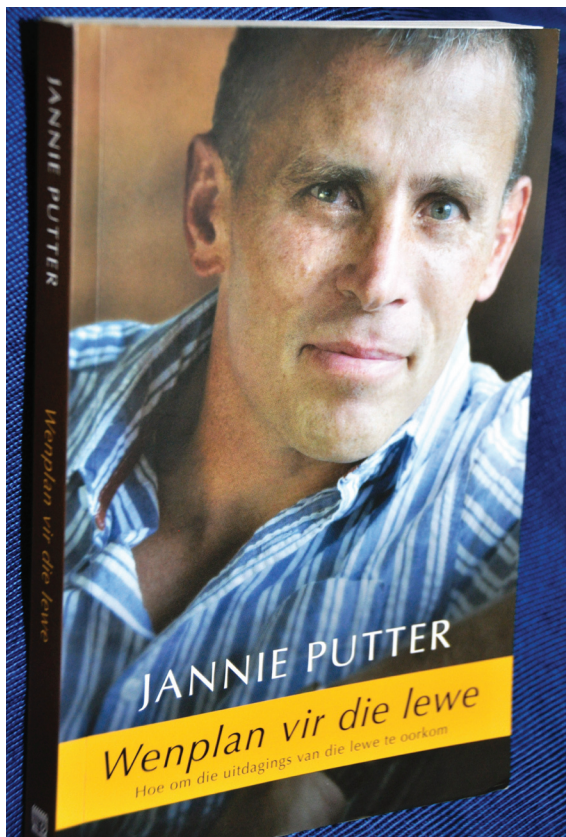
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Dynamis is a ministry to support and inform families and educators. The goal is to serve and equip parents to make the most of their learning experiences by focusing on the uniqueness and character development of their children. Dynamis connects various people in South Africa to bring hope where parents experience a feeling of desperation.

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