

Youth Football Rankings are Harmful and Bogus!

Volunteer coaches are sabotaging teams and creating chaos in our parks in an effort to get fake glory online. Coaches brag about where their teams are ranked, and use those rankings to undermine each other, with the ultimate goal of playing in a popular bowl game. To be clear, rankings are different from standings. Standings are the result of games played. The reality is no one knows how the rankings are established, and nobody knows who is doing the voting. It is entirely possible that two or three people get together each week and decide which teams are the best, simply based on which coach is the most popular guy around town. It is also likely that some youth football teams get ranked because they make financial contributions to the organizations publishing the polls. It is unlikely that anyone reading this article can name a single person on the rankings committee.

So, what's the point? What is the value in ranking six-year-old football players? Why do coaches get worked up over the baseless opinions of

unidentified sources? The truth is the rankings are a huge marketing ploy. The scheme works like this: Teams are ranked online; coaches, parents, and even some kids flock to the websites like sheep - without asking any questions. The owners of the website generate a great deal of popularity and web traffic as a result. The website owners then convert that internet traffic into cash by convincing sponsors that they have a substantial, captive online market. Additionally, they leverage the popularity of the site to hold tournaments and bowl games (which generate more money) to promote themselves and the few coaches in their inner circle. Meanwhile, the general public assumes that there is some serious, rigorous analysis of youth football which establishes the undisputed dominance of one program over another. This season there are over 140 youth football teams in the Atlanta metro area playing in the u10 age division. How can anyone truly determine which team is the best? It is virtually impossible to do so. Even if a pecking order could be established, why would anyone care? Only woefully unaccomplished people boast about grade-school kids being ranked on a website.

Youth sports are supposed to be about fun, teamwork, personal development, community building, and friendly competition. The ways in which some coaches engage in cutthroat activities just to win ball games, get ranked, and earn invitations to bowl games is pathetic. It is embarrassing to know that these otherwise fantastic volunteers get so caught up in celebrity that they cannot recognize the hustle. The constant jumping of teams from park to park is an indictment of this system. Coaches abandon teams they

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think aren't good enough, only to hop onto another bandwagon of "ballers." Parents whine on message boards because their kid's team "slipped in the polls." Volunteers pose for cameras and give self aggrandizing interviews as if they are major college football coaches answering questions on their own local call-in show. The fact that many programs have declining participation can, in part, be attributed to coaches and parents who promote a child's game as if it were a professional athletic enterprise. At the end of the day, youth football does not benefit, and these bogus rankings are taking a toll on our community.