

## Parentally Speaking part 3 – January 2008

***Sometimes it can be costly to outfit the kids from a large family with athletic equipment. Is there that much of a difference between new and used equipment at the youth level, and how do you deal with issues such as self-consciousness as the kids get older and don't have the same new equipment that their friends do?***

This is a difficult situation for several reasons. Many parents have made the mistake of going out and buying brand new equipment for their kids only to have them change their minds and stop participating in athletics. The cost of equipment is very high, and even in our family, growing up in baseball, we had to share equipment and pass it down.

There are a couple of suggestions I would have as far as how you present the used equipment. I would have a closet, a locker or a trunk where you keep the family's athletic equipment. Maybe you have dad's glove in there and then go out and buy a couple of gloves from a used equipment store, so it's almost like going through a treasure chest when the kids have a need for some sort of sports equipment.

My other suggestion is for cleats. Kids' feet grow so fast that they rarely wear out their cleats. I would look for opportunities to use cleats for multiple sports. There are many cleats out there that are multi-purpose. Turf shoes, for example, or shoes with rubber cleats can be used for baseball as well as soccer. So, I would look to get use out of a pair of cleats for more than one activity.

The treasure chest can help disguise hand-me-downs and can hold the family collection of sports equipment. It can be cool for a kid to say, "This is the glove that dad used." I'm sure that most kids would be willing to take it out on the field, use it and maybe even re-string it with new leather. My dad spent time showing me how I could take an old glove and make it better simply by putting new leather in it, so that can turn out to be a bonding experience for a father and son.

As for the cost of the equipment, I would look to offset that by suggesting that the team

purchase equipment. The cost of bats and helmets can be shared by everyone on the team since these items can be used by all of the players.

Usually, where there's a will, there's a way. Sometimes by being creative in your approach and presentation you can accomplish your goals as far as limiting cost and not upsetting your kids.

**By Cal Ripken Jr.**