

Parentally Speaking - November 2007

What are your thoughts about sponsored travel teams that have the ability to recruit players from many areas?

Again, this answer really depends on the age group we are talking about. I think that at the older age groups – maybe 15 and up – that there is a place for teams that are sponsored and that recruit some of the best talent from a particular area. Most times these teams are designed to give young athletes an opportunity to showcase their abilities against other top talent from other parts of the country. This helps with the overall development of these players and provides a service for the players, their parents, college coaches and professional scouts alike.

Obviously, when you are talking about a sponsored team of elite players, the goal is to put together a club capable of competing with like-minded teams. Winning is a primary objective, along with getting exposure for the sponsor and the kids in the program. I don't really think that sending that message to kids in the younger age groups is healthy. The game gets serious enough fast enough. I think at times we already are teetering on the edge burning kids out physically and mentally with the number of games we schedule and the time commitment we are asking them to make. Asking them to try out for elite, sponsored teams that are designed with the goal of winning as many tournaments as possible at a young age, in my opinion, exposes them to a situation that they may not be prepared to handle physically or emotionally.

By Cal and Bill Ripken