



## **Perseverance Is a Lesson All Kids Need to Learn**

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One thing a sport does to anyone who seriously participates is test their level of perseverance.

Perseverance is one of many traits of character; one that challenges us to stay on a course of action, no matter what adversity may arise. Perseverance helps us stay focused on our mission, even when the obstacles seem insurmountable. Perseverance means giving our best until the final tick of the clock.

Super Bowl XLII has come and gone, but the memories live on. The underdog New York Giants persevered and pulled off a huge last-minute upset, and coach Bill Belichick of the New England Patriots ran off the field when time on the clock remained. Was this poor sportsmanship? In Belichick's defense, he may have thought the clock ran out. However, when the referee reminded Belichick that one play needed to be run, he ran into the tunnel, anyway.

What kind of message does this send to our kids? Is it OK to quit when we know we're not going to get the prize? What about sticking around and respecting our opponent and giving it its due?

It's tough to congratulate our successful opponents when so much is riding on the line, but that's why perseverance is a trait of character.

Legitimately, there are times in life when it's better to walk away than to continue forward. A couple of examples are when we are in a dead-end job or playing for an abusive coach. However, unless seriously injured, I can't think of any good reason to quit during a contest.

Even though he had a record-breaking season, receiver Randy Moss once left a game before it was over, and he has a history of giving inconsistent effort. Athletes or coaches who quit are hard to count on, and send mixed messages. Our kids will need perseverance in life, and it's great for them to properly learn it in sports.

A couple of years ago in a local youth basketball tournament, I witnessed an amazingly talented team from a different part of the state. For eighth graders, I could tell these young men were confident in their abilities, and even seemed annoyed when they faced less talented opponents.

Prior to the championship round, the talented team lost. I wish I could have seen the team that beat it. After it lost, the talented team packed up its bags and went home, leaving the tournament director with a hole in his bracket. Because it had no chance of winning the championship, it apparently felt it wasn't worth its time to stick around. What lesson were these boys taught that day?

A classic example of the value of persevering involves the New York Giants in a 1978 NFL regular season game. This game had a slightly different outcome than the Giants most recent game.

Leading the Philadelphia Eagles 17-12 with only seconds to play, the Giants needed to run one play and victory would be theirs.

Quarterback Joe Pisarcik turned and tried to hand off the football, but it was fumbled. Eagles safety Herman Edwards scooped up the ball and ran it in for the winning touchdown.

It is said, "The race is not always to the swift, but to those who keep on running." That's what our kids need to know.

If we allow ourselves to quit, we could second-guess ourselves forever. The example we need to set and to follow is the eloquent and profound motto we all learned as a kid: It ain't over 'til it's over.