



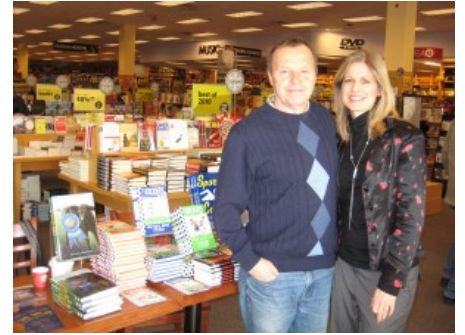
Dear Reader,

When I was a boy, sports were very important in our house. I had three older brothers, and they all played football and ran track. So I couldn't wait to play sports, too.

I always tried hard in sports, and I did pretty well. But sometimes I tried too hard. Like Ben in the "Kickers" books, there were a few times where my temper got me in trouble. I had to learn that having fun was the most important thing about sports and games, whether you win or lose.

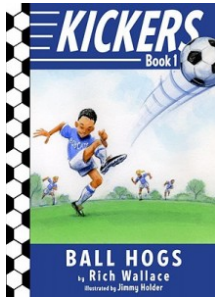
I was kind of small, so there were times that a football coach or a basketball coach decided that I wasn't likely to be much help to the team, since size can make a difference in those sports. That just made me work harder. And later, when I found sports like track and cross-country, that hard work really paid off.

I can remember being quite nervous about my first games of Little League baseball or junior basketball. I thought hard about that nervousness while I was writing the "Kickers" books, because I wanted Ben's experiences in the books to be helpful to you readers. I hope that by sharing his wins and losses, you'll learn some things that will boost your own enjoyment when you play.



Rich and his wife, Sandra

I've included "Ben's Top Tips for Soccer Players" at the end of each book.



Here are some of the tips from Book One: [THE BALL HOGS](#)

- Always warm up before a game or practice. Try some jogging and jumping jacks.
- Work on keeping the ball close to your feet when you dribble. Don't just kick it and chase it.
- Be a supportive teammate. Say positive things and encourage everyone to work hard.

And this is the most important rule:

- Always have fun!

All best,

[Rich Wallace](#)