

Parents Guide for Soccer and the Coach

The Coach is the Coach! We want our soccer players to relate to his or her coach as soon as possible concerning soccer matters. His relationship between the coach and soccer player produces best results. When parents interfere with opinions as to how the soccer player should play or train, it causes considerable, and oftentimes insurmountable, confusion as to whom the soccer player should listen to. If you have a problem, concern or complaint, please contact the coach. Best kind of parent: The coach's job is to motivate and constructively criticize soccer player's performance. It is the parent's job to supply the love, recognition, and encouragement necessary to make the child work harder in practice, which in turn gives him or her confidence to perform well in competition.

Problems with the Coach?

One of the traditional soccer team communication gaps is that some parents seem to feel more comfortable in discussing their disagreements over coaching philosophy with other parents rather than taking them directly to the coach. Not only is the problem never resolved that way, but in fact this approach often results in new problems being created.

Guidelines for a parent raising difficult issues with a coach:

1. Try to keep foremost in your mind that you and the coach have the best interests of your child at heart. If you trust that the coach's goals match yours, even though his or her approach may be different, you are more likely to enjoy good rapport and constructive dialogue.
2. Keep in mind that the coach must balance your perspective of what is best for your child with the needs of the team that ranges in size of 6-14 members. On occasion, an individual child's interest may need to be subordinate to the interests of the group, but in the long run the benefits of the membership in the group compensate for the occasional short term inconvenience.
3. If another parent uses you as a sounding board for complaints about the coach's performance or policies, listen empathetically, but encourage the other parent to speak directly to the coach. He/she is the only one who can solve the problem.
4. If you feel you can't discuss and resolve matters with your child's coach, then ask for a third party to join the dialogue, IE board member.

The Ten Commandments for Parents of Athletic Children

Reprinted from The Young Athlete by Bill Burgess

1. Make sure your child knows that-win or lose, sacred or heroic—you love him/her, appreciate their efforts, and are not disappointed in them. This will allow them to do their best without fear of failure. Be the person in their life they can look to for constant positive reinforcement.
2. Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic ability, his/hers competitive attitude, their sportsmanship, and their actual skill level.
3. Be helpful, but don't coach him/her on the way to the field or on the way back, or at breakfast, and so on. It's tough not to, but it's a lot tougher for the child to be inundated with advise, pep talks and often critical instruction.
4. Teach them to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying," to be working to improve his/her soccer skills and attitudes. Help him/her to develop the feel for competing, for trying hard and for having fun.
5. Try not to relive your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure: you lost as well as won. You were frightened, you backed off at times, and you were not always heroic. Don't pressure your child because of your pride. Athletic children need their parents so you must not withdraw. Just remember there is a thinking, feeling, sensitive free spirit out there in that uniform who needs a lot of understanding, especially when his world turns bad. If he/she is comfortable with you---win or lose----he/she is on their way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.
6. Don't compete with the coach. If the coach becomes the authority figure, it will run from enchantment to disenchantment, etc..., with your athlete.
7. Don't compare skills, courage, or attitudes of your child with other members of the team.
8. Get to know the coach so that you can be assured that his/her philosophy, attitudes, ethics, and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under his/her leadership.
9. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before over reacting.
10. Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains, and are afraid to fight. Some of us will fight, but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain areas. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear, but a means of doing something in spite of fear of discomfort.

Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds.

-Albert Einstein

