



# Coach Ignores My Kid – What Should I do?

*This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.*

**"I'm not sure if this is the right place or not, but I'm at a total loss. I have a junior in high school who has played soccer since he was 4. He's a great kid on and off the field. There is some friction between a few of his teammates and himself, as well as the coaches. One example (this has happened numerous occasions, different circumstances), tomorrow is homecoming, some of the seniors were telling the coach that they wanted him to be a part of the homecoming attendees... the coach looked at them, didn't say a word, and picked another player... now please don't misconstrue my concern, I could care less about the homecoming issue.**

**My concern is that my child is constantly ignored by the coaches, he can ask a question and they either do not acknowledge him or they tell him to shut up... He has 2 other kids on the team (one is a co-captain) who call him names and just cause tension on the field. I'm not really sure what to do at this point.... he wants to play soccer in college and his head coach last year said that's a definite possibility, but this coach is no longer coaching due to health issues..... any advice would be appreciated."**

## PCA Response by PCA Lead Trainer, Joe Terrasi

This is a challenging question. Before offering specific suggestions, it may be helpful to think of it reframed: A close coworker asks you for advice. While he is well-liked at the office, his boss seems to have taken a dislike to him, ignores his input, and seems to pass him over for interesting assignments and advancement. What advice do you give?

Most of us have faced disagreements with our professional superiors. Let's face it, most of us have experienced bosses who were poor leaders or who created a toxic culture. Even as a seasoned professional, it can be very difficult to approach difficult authority figures with respect and honesty. While it won't be easy, you have an opportunity to teach your son a challenging skill he will almost surely need down the road.

*continues*

What your son likely needs is not your direct intervention, but your advice and empowerment to approach his coaches directly in a way that may have a positive outcome. The likely concern (whether his or yours) is that the coach will not take kindly to this or will somehow hold it against him (possibly by limiting playing time). The good news is that by gaining the support of his teammates, your son has already demonstrated that he has strong social skills; it's likely that he can bring this same social intelligence to his conversation with his coaches. As for the possibility that a coach might retaliate, I can't make promises, but in my experience, most strong coaches value strong athletes who can advocate for themselves respectfully.

This can spark a fantastic conversation with your son about the type of approach that a coach (or boss) is likely to hear without becoming defensive. Some ideas that might help include:

- An important discussion deserves its own time and place. Rather than catching coach after practice, try asking coach if he could set aside time for a brief meeting – maybe in his office space. Letting the coach set the time and venue is a way of demonstrating respect and is less likely to put him on the defensive.
- The discussion should be about you, *not* your teammates. Comparing yourself to teammates puts the coach in a tough spot. It also raises questions about your team ethic. Even if you have teammates who do things that are unproductive (calling names as you described), try to be direct without blaming.
- Your coach is like a teammate, too. You both want a lot of the same things including a competitive, cohesive team. Approach your coach with a spirit of collaboration and an attitude of “how can I be best for the team?”
- Your respect and gratitude will go a long way. This is a great time to learn how to request the meeting, conduct yourself during the meeting, and thank your coach at the end.

Working with your son on these advanced life skills will also have an impact on his collegiate playing prospects. College coaches look closely at players while they are playing as well as how they act on the sidelines, before games, and after games. They note carefully which players support their teammates – especially when the going gets tough. Moreover, they consistently seek players who can solve problems (with teammates or coaches) independently and respectfully.

Watching your child treated in a way that appears to be unfair is remarkably painful. There are certainly times when they are “in over their heads,” and as parents we need to intervene. In most cases, though, difficult coaches can be an opportunity for athletes to learn an important life skill that outweighs what they will learn about their sport.

To read more questions and answers like this, or to submit your own question to the Ask PCA blog, visit:

[www.positivecoach.org/our-tools/ask-pca](http://www.positivecoach.org/our-tools/ask-pca)