



Advocating For Your Athlete's Playing Time

By Jim Thompson, Founder and CEO, Positive Coaching Alliance

Playing time is probably the biggest source of frustration and anger among sports parents, which is saying a lot.

An Unarguable Point

Kids love to play. They don't like to sit on the bench. Moreover, most of the benefits of playing a sport are tied to competing in games. Kids who sit benefit less from sports than kids who play. I don't see how anyone can argue with this.

Good Coaches Get Kids into Games

It is a tenet of good coaching that you get kids into games! Period. Whether there are any external rules for minimum playing time or not. Whether it is at the high school or highly competitive travel team level or not. Good coaches get kids into games! They may be creative about how they get kids into games in high-stakes situations, because a Double-Goal Coach® does want to win. But a good coach – a Double-Goal Coach – gets kids into games! Have I made myself clear?

What's a Parent to Do?

What is a parent to do when your child does NOT have a good coach who gets kids into games?

1. Check out the ground rules. Are there any playing time rules in this program? If not, go to the leadership of the program to propose this.
2. Check it out with your child. Is your son upset by not playing? Ask him how he feels about this. Whatever you do, don't exclude him from the process and complain to the coach without consulting your child.
3. Cut out the middleman (that's you!). Instead of talking to the coach, encourage your child to approach the coach. Parents complaining to coaches about their child's playing time rarely has good results. On the other hand, coaches almost always respond well to a player who comes to them saying, "Coach, I'd like to play more. What can I do to get more playing time?"
4. Find out your options. Is there another program (perhaps one affiliated with Positive Coaching Alliance) that recognizes the importance of playing time for every athlete? If all else fails, and your kid is still sitting on the bench all the time, vote with your feet. Take your child to a better program.

