



# Coach Gives My Son the 'Cold Shoulder'

*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.*

**"My 16-year-old son has a new coach, who doesn't interact much with my son. He sees the coach coaching, talking to and joking with other players, but my son feels ignored and left out. Any insight?"**

## PCA Response by Al Adamsen, PCA Trainer-San Francisco

This experience is not uncommon, but the good news is that the situation may provide a growth opportunity for your son.

Coaches of 16-year-olds competing at a high level often believe their primary goal is to get talented players to the next level. We at PCA, however, believe a coach's primary goal is to facilitate learning for all team members, individually and as a group, in terms of both goals of a Double-Goal Coach : winning, and the second, more-important goal of life lessons through sports.

If your son shares with his coach, privately, how he feels in a forthright, courageous way, it'll likely earn him the attention he deserves and help the coach improve. To improve the chances that the coach is open to your son's feedback, your son may take some elements of the following approach, perhaps practicing with you first:

- 1. Validate the experience of the coach: "Coach, I recognize there are a lot of guys out here...", "Coach, I know we don't know each other very well...", "Coach, you're obviously very knowledgeable about the game..."**
- 2. Share his feelings: "When you're giving other kids attention and ignoring me it makes me feel left out and discourages me..."**
- 3. Be clear about what he wants: "I want to feel like a valued member of this team...", "I want you to teach me to be a better team member and soccer player..."**
- 4. Ask how he, as a player, can help: "Can I do something differently to improve?"**

These approaches should prompt the coach to share his reasoning and help your son improve his situation. However, your son must be ready for responses that range from the coach's confusion to defensiveness to understanding and compassion. It is best for your son to try to go into this conversation with no expectations.

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Even if the coach does not change, your son should feel good about summoning the courage to advocate for himself, a lesson that will prove invaluable throughout his life.

We hope you and your son will remember that many coaches are learning and improving too, and that, at times, they need coaching themselves. Unfortunately, many don't seek it, and they simply rely on their experiences as players and observing other coaches, who are not necessarily the best examples. If this coach doesn't change, the season will end in a few weeks and your son will have learned something, even if it's simply what he doesn't want in a coach. Hopefully, your son will be compassionate to this coach and understand and leverage his power as a player and as a human being.

*PCA Trainer Al Adamsen has been involved in youth sports in various forms for nearly 20 years. He's coached youth soccer, basketball, as well as college football. He's a father of two who's helping his kids evolve their relationships with sports. Professionally, Al is a long-standing management consultant with extensive international experience. He specializes in Talent Management and Leadership Development, whose disciplines relate closely to league, team, and individual player development. Al is a graduate of the University of California Davis and holds a bachelor's degree in Economics and a Master's degree in Organizational Development.*

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