



My Kid Acts Disinterested In Sports But Says She Loves It

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 coach a varsity women's lacrosse team and I have a goalie who seems to not have any interest in playing. Her body language says that she is bored, she complains a lot about practically every aspect of the game, and she refuses to try and play on the field. It seems like her dad is pushing her to be a goalie, and throughout the entire season I have tried so many different tactics on how to get her to be interested in getting better. I've tried recording her so she can see how she looks in goal, I've tried heart to heart conversations, I've tried "tough love" and I've tried leaving her completely alone to try and see if she can help herself. She tells me she loves being a goalie but her body language and attitude tell a completely different story. The team is incredibly supportive of her and she likes the social part of practice, but she doesn't like anything else. Any suggestions on what to do?"

PCA Response by PCA Lead Trainer, Joe Terrasi

Thanks for the insightful and challenging question! I've had players like you describe and heard similar stories from many other coaches. I admire and endorse your "try everything" approach – this is great coaching.

Since I can't divine whether she is there for her own reasons or her father's (or a combination), we should proceed with the assumption that she has been honest that "she loves being a goalie." Playing goalie in lacrosse (or in an sport with a goalie) presents some distinct mental and emotional challenges. The sense of individual responsibility can be enormous and isolating.

If she does indeed love playing goalie, part of the problem is that she is not demonstrating this emotion outwardly – her inner love and her body language are not aligned. This is something you might be able to work with "from the outside in." You can first work with her teammates to embrace the concept that preventing goals is a team responsibility that requires great communication. From there, you might have success convincing your keeper that her affect – the outward appearance of her emotions – is as much a form of communication as her words. This approach could have twofold benefits: It would de-emphasize the notion that goals are "her fault" while also demonstrating the value of also looking like she loves the game.

This might not be an accurate diagnosis, but it is an example of how you will need to work with her to see what's disconnected (what she says and how she looks) and start to identify why this is and how to solve it. It's clear from the tone of your question that you have her best interest at heart. This is a great basis from which to start.

Thank you for your commitment to youth sports!