



BETTER ATHLETES
BETTER PEOPLE



Dealing With Overly Critical Teammates

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.

“How do I help my nine-year-old son handle overly critical teammates? There are a few of his teammates that have been hounding him aggressively about every small mistake. I want him to learn how to work with the various personalities that exist on any team, but at the same time, nothing that the coaches say does anything to stop these specific kids. I want him to continue to love playing baseball, but I'm worried about the effect these teammates are having on his desire to play.”

PCA Response by David Jacobson, PCA Trainer & Senior Marketing Communications and Content Manager

It sounds like the coaches need to do a better job of team-building. If you have not already talked with the coaches about this, you should. Start by requesting a private conversation with whichever coach you expect will be most open-minded about your concerns.

However, it is important that if/when coaches then address the matter with players, it not come across as “Timmy and his dad asked us to tell you to stop picking on Timmy.” That would just lead to greater scapegoating/ostracism/bullying of your son.

Rather, the coaches should put greater emphasis on players relating to each other more positively. They should emphasize that if all players feel like teammates have their backs, all players are likely to perform better, leading to greater team success. Your son’s coaches can use techniques such as the “Buddy System,” and coaches can model positive reinforcement through the “Winner’s Circle.”

Again, he may want to tie this to performance, rather than to “hurt feelings” which could actually lead the others to pick on him more. So, instead of “it bothers me when you say this,” he could say, “I really want our team to succeed. I really want to contribute. I know I’ve made some mistakes. You seem to know what you’re doing out in the field, and if you can help me improve, we’ll all be better off.”

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