



Questionable Transfer

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 son started at point guard on his high school basketball team last season and led the team to a .500 record. This season, he is playing behind a phenomenally talented kid, who transferred to the school under questionable circumstances. This team has a chance to win state, and my son knows that would be a great experience, but between lack of playing time and ethical concerns, my son is considering quitting the team. How do you suggest I advise my son?”

PCA Response by Jim Thompson, PCA Executive Director

Encourage your son to let the rumors about unethical behavior go (and you let them go also). The new teammate either transferred legally – in which case this isn’t an issue – or he didn’t, in which case it’s still not your or your son’s responsibility to address, unless either of you has some definitive proof of wrongdoing. Neither of you can control this situation, so according to good sport psychology, focus on what you can control and ignore the rest.

As a parent, I encourage you to let your son make this decision but only after you are sure he has considered all important aspects of it. Converse with him, possibly helping him make a list of pluses and minuses for quitting/sticking. Make sure he is aware of the following:

- Basketball is a team game, and getting a talented new player can elevate the play of the entire team, including your son’s.
- If the transfer is very, very good, your son might not be able to compete with him, but still can contribute in other ways and help the team go a long way.
- If the new player isn’t as good as advertised, your son can compete with him for playing time, which will help both players – and the team – improve.
- Your son may get court-time with the new player, which will be fun for your son, because a great point guard will get your son the ball in a situation where he can do something with it.





Questionable Transfer, continued

- As Dr. David Carr mentions on our blog, the star might get injured. How will your son feel if that happens and he isn't on the team to step in and contribute?
- In the long run, what will make your son a better person, quitting and focusing on something else valuable, or staying on the team and trying to make everyone on it better?

In any event, your son should talk with the coach about his role on the team. Just quitting without a conversation with the coach is not good form in almost every case. He also may learn some things that will help his decision – in either direction.

Unlike many people, I don't believe it is always bad to quit. Everything we do has opportunity costs – the other things you can't do because of where you choose to focus your effort.

If it really is a downer for your son to play ball this year, encourage him to leave for something else rather than just leave. What will he do with his time that will enrich his life and the school community if he doesn't play ball? That is a question worth pondering, not just this year but every year of all of our lives.

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