



BETTER ATHLETES
BETTER PEOPLE



Player's Temper Tantrums

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 12-year-old son plays baseball, football and basketball. His athletic ability is above average, but his emotional development is not. To put it bluntly, he has a bad temper. When he strikes out he throws the bat. When he walks a few batters he gets down on himself. If he gets sacked he spikes the ball and costs his team penalties. No amount of support can bring him out of these moods. I am looking for advice, including materials to read so we can work together through these episodes."

PCA Response by Joe Scally, PCA Trainer-Chicago

Your son's behavior, unfortunately, is not unusual. He may have seen pro athletes and coaches throw equipment, break water coolers with bats, bang on scorer's tables, and otherwise vent frustration. However, the type of behavior you describe should not be tolerated at any level of competition. Players who lose their cool hurt the team and are in a state of mind where they can't compete. More importantly, it's just plain disrespectful to himself, the team and the game.

Fortunately, there are some powerful behavior modifiers you and your son's coach can use to help him keep cool: consequences, ignoring bad behavior, and praising good behavior. Work with the coach to set and explain a clear consequence to your son and then apply it whenever he misbehaves. For example, take him out of the game until he cools down. The coach should calmly apply the consequence and then ignore your son until your son calms down. Then the coach should praise him for getting himself together and send him back into the game.

Be patient. You may need to repeat this process until the behavior begins to change. Your son may try to push the limits until he realizes the coach is serious. It's important for the coach to stay calm to model the right type of behavior.

Also, you may need to adjust the consequence if the first one you try doesn't work after a while. Perhaps your son will sit out a complete game the next time he misbehaves. But remember to praise him when he handles mistakes or frustrating events in the right way.

continues



Player's Temper Tantrums, continued

If the coach tolerates your son's behavior, is unwilling to work with you, or vents his own frustration in destructive ways, it's time to move from that team. If your son's bad temper also shows up in school or at home or if his bad moods last long after the game or are out of proportion to events, you should seek consultation to develop a comprehensive approach.

If his temper tantrums are limited to a sports context, it's time for him to learn that real competitors react to adversity calmly and with increased resolve. Point out examples of great athletes who don't blow up when they fail. Future equipment managers will thank you for helping your son to keep a cool head.

PCA Trainer Joe Scally is a longtime soccer coach based in the Chicago area. Joe spent several years as PCA's national director of training.

To read more questions and answers like this, or to submit your own question to the Ask PCA blog, visit:

www.positivecoach.org/our-tools/ask-pca

For more Resources, visit: www.PCAdevZone.org

For more information on Positive Coaching Alliance, visit: www.PositiveCoach.org