

1. The Coach as Partner Your son has a new coach for the upcoming season. As a Second-Goal Parent, what can you do to ensure a positive relationship with the coach?

Students do better academically when they know their parents support the teacher and school. The same is certainly true for sports. Here's how you can help establish a coach-parent partnership to help your athlete have the best possible experience.

- Contact your athlete's coach as soon as you know who it is. Introduce yourself, and let him know that you appreciate his commitment that goes way beyond the amount of time spent at practices and games. Most coaches only hear from parents when there is a problem. By establishing a positive relationship early, it will be much easier to talk with him later if a problem arises.
- Make the coach's job easier. Attend parent meetings. Check with the coach before scheduling vacations during the season. If you can, offer to help if he ever needs volunteers. Don't say or do anything that might undermine the coach's authority. Display a positive, upbeat attitude around the coach and other parents. This will help the coach focus maximum attention on helping the players improve rather than worrying about the parents.
- Fill the coach's Emotional Tank. When he is doing something you like, let him know, in person or by e-mail, and mention it to other parents as well. Thank him after games – especially ones when the team lost. Bring him a cup of coffee at an early morning practice. Send a thank you card in the *middle* of the season. Coaches with full E-Tanks have more to give – to the team and to your athlete.
- Don't put your athlete in the middle between his coach and you. Never criticize the coach in front of your athlete or other parents. When parents support a coach, it is easier for an athlete to put his wholehearted effort into learning to play well, while divided loyalties make it harder for him to do his best.

- Even if you think your teen's coach is not handling a situation well, do not share that opinion with your teen. If you conclude that something needs to be done, meet with the coach to talk about it, but not when you are upset and have trouble controlling your emotions. Observe a "cooling off" period of 24 hours. This will give you time to think about your goals and script what you want to say. Case Studies 3 and 5 have more on whether and how to talk with the coach.
- Let the coach coach. Providing additional technical or tactical coaching can do more harm than good, especially as it may conflict with the coaches' advice. Trying to win is the responsibility of the players and coaches. You have a much more important role to play. Retain your Second-Goal focus on the life lessons your athlete learns from sports.

THE HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS PARENT

Developing Triple-Impact Competitors



By Jim Thompson



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