



The Sport Parent: THEIR Side of the Story

Lindsey Blom & Linda Schoenstedt

Introduction



The number one source of conflict between coaches and parents are disagreements about the abilities of their child...the athlete (Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007).

Coach's Viewpoint

- Parents who rarely come to practices and games or have limited experience with the sport but are openly critical.
- Over-identification of parents who live vicariously through their children.
- The “can't miss” Division I scholarship athlete (according to the parent).
- The athlete who is a role player.

Parents' Point of View

Sport parents have challenges of . . .

- Being careful not to become too dependent on successes of child
- Trying to be realistic about the child's talent
- Separating child's performance from their view of themselves
- Managing increased, intense emotions from watching their child perform in public
- Sharing control of their child with another adult

Rights of Sport Parents

- To have a coach who makes their athlete feel valued for his/her unique contribution to the sport
- To have a coach who challenges their child while building his/her confidence
- To have an opinion that differs from the coach's
- To have a coach who treats the parent and child with respect
- To say 'no' to a coach's request if it is inappropriate or harmful to the child's well-being (even if it means less playing time later!)

Successful Strategies for Having Positive Relationships with Parents

- Have a parents meeting before the season
 - Explain your coaching philosophy
 - Explain how, when, and about what you want to be approached
- Understand typical reasons for conflict
- Remember the parents' point of view
- Encourage a cooling off period
- Be a listener first
- Get parents involved by focusing on their strengths
- Be upfront and honest
- Designate a parent liaison
- Provide concrete suggestions for how parents can help provide a positive atmosphere

References

- Smith, R. E., & Smoll, F. (1996). Psychological interventions in youth sport. In J. Van Raalte & B. W. Brewer (Eds.), *Exploring sport and exercise psychology* (pp. 287-315). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Smith, R. E., Smoll, F. L., & Cumming, S. P. (2007). Effects of a motivational climate intervention for coaches on young athletes' sport performance anxiety. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 29(1), 39-59.
- Weinberg, R.S. & Gould, D. (2011). *Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. Human Kinetics, Champaign, IL.
- Janssen, J & Dale, G. (2002). *The Seven Secrets for Successful Coaches*. available by visiting www.jeffjanssen.com

Questions?

