

Parents 6 Ways you're doing it Wrong

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I love my kids more than anything. So, I get it, how they perform is important to me. But their performance is not a reflection of my parenting, just a shadow. The most important mental skill of athletes reaching their full potential is passion- the love for their sport! Each of the following is related to nurturing their passion, not the parents. Here is 6 ways that sport parents are doing it wrong.



1. Wanting it more than them- I get calls every single week from parents wanting our mental coaching for their son/daughter. I have to screen each parent, and one question I ask them, “Is this something your child wants?” Whatever the situation they have to want it, period. No matter the sport, the best athletes have that passion. They don’t have to be asked to work at it, because they love it.
2. Not allowing them to fail- Losing hurts and it should hurt. The pain eventually subsides, but if we remove the failure, setbacks, and allowing them ownership of their mistakes, than we actually cheapen the joy of winning. How can we truly appreciate winning and improvement if we have never lost? The safety net for children has become dangerously close to actually touching them. They know mom or dad will take care of it... Example: “I forgot my glove, my gatorade, jersey, goggles, putter, etc, Mom and dad will pick it up for me.”
3. Traveling too early- It’s the gateway drug to specialization. Anything before late middle school is too early. A few travel tournaments or matches here and there is great, its fun! But even for young kids, the trips have become every single weekend. Here’s the danger, it becomes expensive and once they start traveling, it’s too easy to buy the idea that they now have to pick a sport and stay with it. Specialization isn’t all that either because the specific movements with different sports actually transfer. Jumping, running, throwing, all transfer across sports! Playing a variety of sports achieves that goal of skill development. Plus, each sport offers a unique advantage, competitiveness. When they learn to compete in many different sports, they will eventually transfer that skill of competitiveness to their favorite!
4. Not emphasize & reward effort- Effort is everything. But, if we only emphasize the outcome, athletes will learn and internalize “all that matters is winning.” Players that are good will win early and often, until they no longer win. If parents only emphasize rankings, final scores, and talent, then taking risks, addressing weaknesses, and competing become afterthoughts. At some point, they are no longer the best, and they can become stuck in limbo between past expectations and low confidence. Question: shouldn’t the best 12-year old in the nation almost always be one the best 18-year olds? Rarely happens because winning and outward appearance was rewarded instead.
5. Blame coach, system, or refs- I was sitting next to a parent of a future DI basketball player whose brother had made it to the NBA. This parent was miserable and every single play or refs call that did not go his son’s way, was heard by everyone including his son. I cried on the inside, because there is no way that this kid was happy either. A little league coach once told me when he knew parents were talking about him because the kids would no longer look him in the eye. Sad...It’s about progress not perfection.

It's not your role to call or blame coach about playing time, change coaches or schools, or get a lesson every time they play bad.

6. Over-communicating with them- There are good opportunities to talk about their performance and not good ones. During the game is NOT the appropriate time. However, all the time, parents are communicating with their son/daughter. Body language doesn't talk, it screams, and they can see your negative behavior. Also, the stands can be packed with hundreds or thousands of screaming people, and the ONE voice they will recognize is yours! Why are you trying to coach them during their performance?

I get it, no one has an ugly child, but if he/she becomes great, then they will get noticed. Really want to be a good sport parent? Just tell them,

“I love watching you play.”

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