

Number 1 Trait of a Great Sports Parent

If you're competitive and passionate about helping your child succeed, it's easy to get carried away when it comes to youth sports. Games can get exciting. There can be pressures to put your kid into more training, personal coaching, year-round leagues.

Unless you're conscious about making sure things don't get out of hand, they will get out of hand. Including your own emotions.

In my humble opinion, the #1 trait of a great sports parent is . . . PERSPECTIVE.

When you have perspective, it's difficult to allow your emotions and competitiveness get the best of you.

Perspective can keep you from getting wrapped up in the craziness, stress and politics found in many youth sports organizations today.

There are 4 key areas where perspective goes a long way.

1. TIME – These years of youth sports go by so fast. Before you know it, your child will be grown and you'll miss the chaotic schedules, games & even practices. I've found myself thinking things like, "I can't wait until he's older and can (fill in the blank)." They'll be older soon enough. Embrace, soak in and capture the moments you have with them right now. You never know. They may decide to stop playing before they ever reach the point in time you've been so busy looking forward to. Then you'll look back and realize all the great moments you took for granted.

2. REFEREES & UMPIRES – I know, I know. It can be difficult to find really good officials. And it can be frustrating when a bad call goes against your kid. This is where perspective is so important. Game officials are just regular people who enjoy sports like you & me. Refing your kid's soccer game at 2:00 on a Saturday afternoon is taking them away from their own family. It's not their full-time profession. They're there to earn some extra money. They don't have it out for your kid's team. They're human and don't have instant replay. They're doing the best that they can. Do you think they want to blow a call so that they have to deal with other grown adults yelling at them and disrespecting them? And here's the biggest point about referees and umpires . . . The kids can't play real games without them.

3. COACHES – Unless a coach is disrespectful to the kids and parents, does something to embarrass your team and organization or puts kids in harm's way, we should think long and hard before criticizing him. When was the last time your child played for a coach who was paid to coach? My point is, youth sports coaches are volunteers. They don't have to take on that role and responsibility, but they do. And they do it to help your kid. There's a lot of stress involved with being a coach and being second-guessed by parents is a recipe for disaster. The best thing you can give a coach is your support, cooperation, respect, and of course, proper perspective.

4. BIG PICTURE – Even though this one is labeled #4, I actually believe it's the biggest one. So many sports parents get borderline obsessed with their child being the best player on their team, in their league and in their city. They're constantly pushing and pressuring their kid to succeed. I get stressed out just by observing some of these parents. Imagine how their kids feel! It's difficult enough to succeed in sports. No kid needs added pressure from his own parents. Who cares if your kid is the best hockey player in the league when he's 10 if he burns out by age 14 and is a complete jerkface by 20?

In the grand scheme of things, the most important outcome from youth sports is how they help your child develop into an awesome adult. If used properly, sports can help your child become an adult with tremendous leadership skills, great work ethic, sound communication skills, empathy, integrity, determination, class, the ability to embrace failure & learn from it and enjoy victory without gloating.

When your child is an adult, hopefully he'll be able to look back upon his youth sports days with fond memories and positive feelings. These things are way more important than the outcome of any game. In 15-20 years, the games won't matter, but who your child became & what your relationship is like as a result of it all will mean more than anything.

That's PERSPECTIVE.