Making Parents a Part of Your Team
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Visit [www.youthsports.msu.edu](http://www.youthsports.msu.edu) for more information on sport parents and coaching
Issues with parents a growing concern

66% of parents are good parents

(Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes & Pennisi, 2006)

Making them a part of your team is important

- Can be tricky and keep you up at night!
- Find the balance of involvement
The Importance of Working Effectively with Sport Parents

- “I like to think that if success is going to be in any program, it’s not only what a coach can do. It takes the parents. We need their support. It’s basically their students, their athletes, and their children.”

- Successful High School Football Coach (Gould, Collins, Lauer & Chung 2002)
Coaches are concerned that parents are well-intentioned but ill-informed.

Some parents are:
- Pressuring their child
- Second-guessing the coach
- Interfering with the educational athletics experience
- Over-involved in child’s sport

While other parents are:
- Under-involved and provide no support
Experienced coaches realize must educate parents to reach team goals.

Behind most great athletes is at least one supportive parent.

Parents have a legal and ethical responsibility to be involved.
Objectives

- Understand the role of the parent
- Examine why parents do things to hinder the sport experience
- Review methods for making parents a part of your team
- Answer your questions
Understanding the Role of Parents

- Providers of the Sport Experience
- Interpreters of the Sport Experience
- Role Models

Fredericks & Eccles, 2004
Providers

- Parents provide the opportunity for their children to play
- Active lifestyle and play with child
- Many Forms of Support
  - Transportation
  - Finances
  - Scheduling
Interpreters

- Children often adopt parent’s sport goals
- Parent’s perspective is often the lens through which the child interprets success and failure
- Influence emotions, stress, & satisfaction
Parents often serve as the model of:

- Physical activity
- Sport participation
- Emotional reactions
- Behavior/
  Sportsmanship
Types of Sport Parent Involvement

- Over-involved
- Under-involved
- Other Parent Types
- Supportive/Optimally-involved parents
Over-involved Parents

- Most visible negative influence
- Really care about child’s sport experience
- However, espouse attitudes and behave in a manner that negatively influences their child and the team
Types of Over-involved Parents

- Don’t have a clue parent
- Unrealistic expectations
- Pressure-criticism
- Parent trying to coach child
Other Problem Parent Involvement Types

- Child can do no wrong
  - Coach becomes the problem
- ‘Be my buddy parent’
  - Trying to be child’s friend leads to parent not enforcing rules
- Sport as arena for violence
  - Reinforce violent behavior
- Abusive parents
  - Be aware of signs of abuse
  - Talk to your AD, Principal, or Sport Administrator if you see the signs
Under-involved Parents

- Do not actively support child in sport
- You are providing ‘baby sitting’
- Some under-involved parents do not hold child responsible for poor behaviors
  - Don’t see the value of sport in developing the child
- Provide little support & may leave the child searching for a caring adult
Disrupting team chemistry
Decreasing enjoyment and fun
Inhibiting learning
Affecting athlete confidence negatively
Sapping athlete motivation
Effects of Negative Parental Behavior

- Undermining coach authority
- Increasing coach, referee, and player dropout
- Increasing violent behavior
- Reinforcing negative moral development
Supportive/Optimally-involved Parent

- Don’t forget about the positive parent and their support and influence
- Trust, support, and appreciate coaches
- Reinforce coach’s messages
- Well informed and monitor child’s sport experience
- Understand fine line between pushing and supporting child
Supportive/Optimally-involved Parent

- Will monitor practices and games to make certain safe and fun learning experience
- Will approach you about concerns
- Can help to keep misguided parents in line
- Great source of support when you involve them in the team
Types of Sport Parent Involvement

- Problem parents often unintentional and misguided
- Create extra work for the coach
- Remember, majority of parents are positive sources of support (66% or more)
- Even the best parent may lose perspective and become too emotionally involved at times
- Need to work with parents!
Do’s and Don’ts of Effective Sport Parenting

- From interviewing and surveying coaches, parents, and players we have learned guidelines for effective sport parenting.

- No parent will be able to do all of these all of the time.

- Go to youthsports.msu.edu parent’s page for more
Why Do Parents Go “Crazy”?

- Most not crazy, emotionally invested in child
- Don’t understand their role (or want more control over child’s development)
- Living through child
- And/or, basing self-worth on accomplishments of child (Coakley, 2006; Gould, Lauer, Roman, & Pierce, 2010)
- Keep up with the “Jones”
- Poor coaching
Making Parents a Part of Your Team

- Educate Parents from Day 1!

- Crisis Management Strategies for Dealing with Problem Parents
  - Extinguishing fires before too much damage is done!
Make Parents a Part of the Team

- Be Proactive!
- Clarify Your Philosophy
- Create a “Collaborative” Relationship
  - Holding Parent’s Meetings
  - Selling them on the Mission and their Role
  - Setting the Expectations
  - Giving them Roles
- Ongoing Communication
  - Building Trust
Philosophy: Working WITH Parents

- Understand what a parent wants from a coach
  - To be in the information loop
  - To hear good things about their kids
  - To see their kids play
  - To be included & among friends
- Parents are sources of support that improve your program
Communicate your philosophy to parents
  - Write it down and hand it out

Your actions must coincide with your philosophy! Be consistent!

Gauge the parents’ philosophies
  - Ask about their goals for the season
  - How are they aligned with your mission and philosophy?
Create a Collaborative Relationship

- Your Objective: To build trust
- How build trust?
  - Reach out, show you are human
  - Show you care (especially when child struggling in on the field, at home, at school, or injured)
  - Avoid wielding your power to intimidate or automatically get your way
  - Be Fair (in treatment, attention)
  - Do the right thing!
Create a Collaborative Relationship

- Hold a parent meeting early in the season
  - To explain tryouts and your criteria for selection
- Hold your orientation meeting once the team is picked
  - Set the stage for clear, transparent communication
  - Make it fun, not a lecture at them
  - Sit and talk with them
  - Listen and answer questions
Sell them on the mission

- Importance of team (“We” before the “Me”)
- Team parent’s role is support of ALL team members
- How the parent can undermine or boost the team
  - Effect of second-guessing and armchair quarterbacking
  - Effect of criticizing team members to validate their child deserving to play
  - Effect of yelling at officials, coaches, and team during game (and just plain old emotional behavior)
Parent Orientation Meeting

- Assign roles ("We" need "You" to function)
  - Manager
  - Statistics
  - Scouting
  - Booths
  - Fund-Raising
  - Dinners
  - Food on Game Day
Set (Cement) the Expectations

- Talk about expectations the program has for players and coaches
- Then discuss expectations of parents (already have given the why)
  - Hand them out, may have them sign it as an agreement
    - Get school/sport organization approval first
- Have the team tell the parents what they want from them during the season
Parent Meeting: Set the Expectations

- Solution- and team-oriented
- 24 hour rule
- Lines of Communication
- When to Communicate
  - When is it too late to call you?
  - What does “open door” really mean?
  - Where and when during practice and game days?
Ongoing Communication

- Dinners as a way to emphasize messages
- 5 minute reinforcers
- Ask Questions and Listen
- Give them updates (maybe via email)
- Never air team issues in a group setting

- Consistent, transparent communication can alleviate issues and stop rumors
Can’t Win Them All

- Be realistic, not everyone will be on your side or on the same page

- Coaches also said that 1% or so intentionally create problems
  - Clashing personalities
  - Personal agendas
At times you will have to confront a disgruntled parent

Three fundamental guidelines:

- Allow the parent to express his or her feelings
- Be business-like and non-emotional
- Hold a private meeting
Crisis Management Strategies for Dealing with Problem Parents

- Private 1-on-1 meetings
  - Think
  - Understand
  - Care
  - Be neutral, yet professional
  - Proceed gradually

Martens, 1987
Crisis Management Strategies for Dealing with Problem Parents

- Talking themselves out of argument
- Perspective taking
  - Having the parent look at a situation from a different perspective (e.g., the official, an athlete) often alleviates issues
- Agreeing to disagree
  - Will they undermine you or be supportive and let you do your job?
- Removal of the parent
  - Be professional/Don’t make it personal
  - Involve AD, Sport Administrator or Facility Management (go to Security/Police if present)
Conclusion

- Parents are an important part of any team
- Get them on board from the beginning of the season
- Communicate effectively throughout the season
- Handle conflicts professionally
Acknowledgments

- USTA Sport Science Committee funded initial research, and USTA High Performance Division supported it.
- Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) offers Effectively Working with Parents module for coaches in CAP.
- Pictures courtesy of MHSAA/Visual Photography & Think Detroit PAL.

- Question and Answer

- Go to the ISYS and ASEP web pages for more information on sport parents and coaching.
Questions and Answers
Additional Resources

- Go to the ISYS www.youthsports.msu.edu and ASEP web pages for more information on sport parents and coaching.

“Sickle Cell Trait Guidelines: What You Need to Know to Protect Your Athletes”

Scott Anderson, Head Athletic Trainer, University of Oklahoma

Wednesday, December 8, 1:00 to 2:00 pm ET

Watch the ASEP Web site at www.ASEP.com for registration information