



# ARIZONA SPORTS COMPLEX NEWSLETTER

How do I avoid getting sucked into an unhealthy perspective of youth sports?

This is a great question that I had to ask myself a couple of times as a parent. I had three son's play soccer all their youth and at times I would become that parent that we all know we can become. Now don't get me wrong as there is a time to get more serious if you child decides to play his or her sport of choice in college or the next level.... but it is so important that we focus on the child's total development first, and athletic development second. It is so easy to get that flipped the other way around, so I want to share with this is great article that I enjoyed reading by Larry Lauer, Ph. D. from the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports.

Youth sports is becoming more than a day at the park or the pool. It is way of life, an important fabric of many children's upbringing and socialization into adulthood. In this way, many parents, coaches and athletes feel that the pursuit of excellence in sport is valuable and teaches many life lessons. Youth sports is also viewed as a means to develop one's athletic talents. Many youth trains diligently in the hopes of playing in an all-star game, starting in a varsity sport, being pursued by collegiate and professional scouts, or becoming a collegiate, and possibly, a professional athlete. The parent is very important in this talent development process. Yet, many parents are viewed by coaches, players, administrators and the media as obstacles that children have to overcome to be successful.



Most sport parents have good intentions and want the very best for their child including the opportunity to have fun, be safe, and be successful. The number of abusive parents is very small. Unfortunately, you see many parents doing things such as pressuring their child or forgetting that it is just a game. These parents are not bad people; they have just lost perspective. They get sucked into an unhealthy perspective of sports by the rising pressure to win and develop talent, increasing possibilities (scholarships, winning), and increasing financial, time, and effort sacrifices. It is natural to want something special to come from your child's sport. But, you want to be careful that you do not fall into the trap of emphasizing winning or pushing skills development over all other aspects of a child's life. Otherwise, an unhealthy perspective creeps in over time.

What happens when a parent emphasizes athletic development first, and the child's total development second? First, the child may begin to feel the pressure to perform for the parent. At the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports we learned from interviews with elite junior tennis players that they may feel pressure well before the parent ever realizes it. Moreover, the parent may not be pressuring at all, it is only the perception of the athlete that they are being pressured. Thus, a parent must be careful not to change how they interact with the child based on his or her performances. Be happy for them when they win, but also be there for them when they lose! A junior tennis parent mentioned that she will do the same thing after a match with her child win or lose. If you're going for ice cream after the game, go no matter the outcome or performance. The second thing that can happen when a parent loses perspective is that it negatively affects the parent-child relationship. For example, arguments about how the child is training or competing increase, the child may ignore the parent or discredit their advice, and discussions about sports become unwanted. These consequences flood over into the relationship outside of sports.

So how do you know if you have lost a healthy perspective of youth sport? Ask a coach or parent that knows you and you trust. Also, look for several warning signs:

- Conversations at home are dominated by sport discussions. Many hours are spent reviewing and breaking down opponents. Or, you tirelessly give your child feedback on her performance.
- You allow little time for your child to spend time with his friends; social activities are restricted.
- Education becomes a distant second priority to competition and talent development.
- Your child is overly nervous about competing especially when you are watching.
- During stoppages of play your child often looks to you for approval.
- Arguments between you and your child often are related to sports.

How do you avoid losing a healthy perspective of youth sport? First, you have to start with a healthy perspective by recognizing youth sports should develop positive characteristics in children. Thus, sports have to be viewed as important but not as an all-encompassing pursuit. Even if you and your child have elite competitive goals, the development of the child should be the priority over the development of the athlete. Moreover, you should have strong values and convictions that are not adapted for winning or competing. Deemphasize winning, rankings, and trophies and emphasize the importance of teamwork, leadership, communication, sportsmanship, and hard work.

It is also very important to facilitate balance in the child's life by emphasizing the importance of education, social activities, and other hobbies. Allow your child to be a child and 'hang out with friends' or play video games. Sports should not be a 24/7 occupation. In fact, it should not be an occupation at all. In addition, check your perspective frequently. Have the "I'm becoming that parent radar" on so you can avoid reacting emotionally to the inevitable up's and down's of youth sports. Most importantly, love and support your child unconditionally because this is what will help you maintain a great parent-child relationship. Finally, avoid being uninvolved or afraid to push a little with fear of pressuring, do it with forethought and the child's best interests in mind.

We also want to take a moment to congratulate last week's Character Card Winners! Great Job to all the players!

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| 🏆 N. Mello U14 Verona Coach Andrew        | 🏆 K. Fernando U10 Villarreal Coach Adrian |
| 🏆 N. Pipper U12 Everton Coach Kliver      | 🏆 B. Hall U10 Sporting Coach Sal          |
| 🏆 C. Jones U12 Chelsea Ethan D            | 🏆 T. Wolf U8 Galaxy Coach Adrian          |
| 🏆 A. Biggs U10 Barcelona Ethan T          | 🏆 E. Fernando U8 Fire Coach Ethan T       |
| 🏆 N. Dumanski U10 Villarreal Coach Adrian |   |

Please stop by the front desk to pick it up next time you're here.

Our children's futures are important and the more we can learn to be a valuable part of it, the better!

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter and have a great weekend!

George Archuleta – ASC Director Youth Soccer