



GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE with David Benzel



Winners' Connection

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Join the Movement!

Coming Soon...

Our ***True Heroes*** Inner Circle Will Tackle the Tough Issues You Are Facing...

I received a phone call this morning from a distraught father who is facing one of the toughest scenarios in sport-parenting. His seventeen year old daughter has been a first-string performer on a top level volleyball team. However a combination of circumstances (a new coach and new talent) on the team has suddenly shaken his daughter's confidence and her personal swagger has taken a hit. "How can I help her get it back?" he asked. "It's painful to watch her struggle so much when it's obvious this is more mental than physical."

Questions like this represent the real day-to-day issues with which sport-parents wrestle. Questions like this call for access to sound parenting principles as well as customized answers in a variety of formats. Growing Champions for Life is preparing to launch a new resource to provide parents with positive strategies and support for situations just like this.

Beginning in February, David Benzel will offer a unique membership opportunity in his True Heroes Inner Circle. This newest tool will allow Growing Champions for Life to create a variety of interactive resources for parents that dive into deeper detail and provide more specific answers for sport-parenting issues.

Included in the membership package will be access to educational video, audio, and written exercises as part of an ever-growing library of tutorials and courses that will enrich your personal parenting style while raising Champions for Life. Our Inner Circle program will also include on-line webinars, live interviews with elite athletes and expert coaches providing you with valuable tips and strategies for being the True Hero in your child's life.

Watch your mailbox in February, so you can be part of this inspiring program.



Optimal Parent Push - Toxic or True?

by David Benzel

During a recent workshop for parents, one of the fathers stated a widely held belief. “I’m not sure you can get a great player without at least one crazy pushy parent.” It’s a topic worth exploring.

Results of a USTA research project conducted by The Institute for the Study of Youth Sports by Daniel Gould, Michigan State University (2004 & 2005), shed some light on the subject. Most parents and coaches admitted to the existence of something referred to as “Optimal Push.” However the majority agreed that it’s a tricky concept. It only works when done right, and there’s a fine line between optimal pushing by a parent and pressuring/over-pushing. I’d like to suggest that by definition, optimal pushing is only optimal IF it works! The problem is that in most cases when parents attempt to push their children, the short-term results suggest success while the long term outcomes (which can’t be seen at the moment) are disastrous. Many cases demonstrate a damaged parent-child relationship, psychological issues for the player, and motivation and performance issues. Many parents discover too late that their strategy had short-term gains and long-term heartache. The future was sacrificed for the present. The Andre’ Agassi story is a perfect example in tennis. After relentless pushing by his father, Agassi reached the tennis pinnacle, but at a price (physically, emotionally and psychologically) most of us would not want our children to pay.

For this reason I believe we must differentiate between two variations of optimal push - Toxic Optimal Push and True Optimal Push. The characteristics of each are demonstrated in specific behaviors that create an overall growth and performance environment. Here are the four cornerstones of each with a brief description.

Toxic Optimal Push

- Controlling - Child is constantly directed by others about what to practice and when to practice, when and where to compete, and how.
- Nagging - Child experiences frequent complaints, criticism, and correcting about behaviors and habits.
- Conflict - Increasing amount of conflict arises between parent and child over sport-related issues, which then spreads to other life issues.
- Condemnation of performance reality - Child regularly receives verbal and non-verbal signals that his or her play is not good enough yet.

True Optimal Push

- Choices - Child is offered a limited number of practice and competition alternatives from which to choose.
- Challenges - Child is often confronted with parent-guided challenges and/or goals to overcome or reach which cause skills to be stretched.
- Collaboration - A team-like atmosphere is created between parents and child that requires working together in decision making and planning.

- Support for child's vision - Conversations and body language convey a belief in the ultimate success journey that is in process, regardless of any particular day's results.

These two versions of optimal push have extremely different outcomes. Most importantly, in a battle for control over the overall sport experience, parents must choose not to win. The sport experience belongs to the child. The ultimate question is not "to push or not push" but something quite different. Since our relationship with our children is the single most important thing, the question is: "How do I consistently send the message that there is nothing my child can say or do that would cause me to reject him or her?"



Phase One Contributors Make an Impact

When David and Cyndi Benzel chose to make an impact on the youth sport experience in America they knew it would require some help. "To operate locally is one thing, but to take our mission to the national level requires a more sophisticated web site and infrastructure" said David. Asking for financial assistance to achieve their Internet marketing aspirations in today's economy seemed a daunting task. However after a few phone calls it was evident that providing sport-parents with educational materials and inspiration is a worthy cause! David and Cyndi have been blessed with some stalwart believers and this is probably just the beginning of what will become a long list of supporters.

David and Cyndi wish to express their sincere appreciation for the generous support of these "Phase One Champions" who are responsible for helping Growing Champions for Life change the world of youth sports.

Jim & Jennifer Parr
Frank Harrison
Ken & Cindy LaRoe

Al & Toni Petrangeli
Dick & Willie Nock
Mike & Theresa McGinley



The Heartbeat Radio Show Goes On!

Tiffani Cyr, afternoon host for Heartbeat Radio (1410 AM from Leesburg, Florida), calls it her favorite half-hour of the day. For six consecutive weeks she interviewed David Benzel as they worked their way through the chapters of David's new book "Five Powerful Strategies for Sport-Parent Success". Listeners from all over the world can catch the dialogue over the Internet by clicking on the "Live Stream" link at www.heartbeatradiousa.com every Monday from 1:30 to 2:00 PM Eastern time zone.

The big news is that Tiffani invited David to continue the conversation every Monday as they banter back and forth over topics covered in David's other book "From Chump to Champ – How Individuals

Go From Good to Great". Tiffani commented, "The material in David's book is such crucial information for parents trying to raise positive children in today's critical world. Everyone needs to think about these strategies each week."

Catch the conversation on the Internet every Monday at 1:30 PM Eastern at www.heartbeatradiousa.com and click on "Live Stream".

Is a Blog Man's Best Friend?

I don't think so, but I have found it fun to have one around! It keeps me thinking, learning, and reflecting on topics that matter. I hope you'll check it out at www.GrowingChampionsForLife.com/blog and choose the topics to read that are important to you. Most importantly, leave a comment about what situations or concepts of sport-parenting that you'd like to have addressed. Or, just share your ideas and experiences so I can keep learning from you!



Growing Champions for Life - Training for Life, Not Just for a Season

For more information, please visit www.growingchampionsforlife.com or call (352) 267-5344.

WRHB Heartbeat Radio: www.heartbeatradiousa.com (live stream)

Products: www.growingchampionsforlife.com/products

David's Blog: www.growingchampionsforlife.com/blog

If you'd like to become a contributor, please call (800) 616-1193 or visit www.growingchampionsforlife.com/donations.

Your support makes it possible to reach more schools and clubs to promote the parental message of unconditional love and share coach-inspired life lessons.