

5 Pivotal Lessons Parents Can Learn from Youth Sports

By David Benzel



Hindsight may be 20/20, but let's face it, wisdom **at any point** in the parenting journey is coveted.

Lucky for us, participation in athletics is always going to be an excellent platform for life lessons to take place – for everyone involved.

Here are 5 valuable lessons that can be pivotal for parents as they relate to their kids in sports.

1) Let the Experience Belong to Your Child

Are you living vicariously through your child?

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It's easy to do.

There seems to be a fine line between understanding what your child goes through in competition and allowing the ups and downs to set **you** on an emotional roller coaster.

However, as the parent, it is important for you to stay in a neutral zone when it comes to your child's wins and losses.

Remember, that your level of ambition may be very different than theirs.

In fact, your motivation is linked to unmet needs in YOUR life so it highly likely that it will be distinct from your child's.

Allow your child to have ownership of their sports journey – it is essential to their growth and frees you up to enjoy the adventure.

2) Don't Judge a Season Based on One Game

Here's an important thought: **A game does not a season make.**

Supportive parents invest time, energy, and resources into their athlete's endeavors. For this reason, it is easy to slide into the mindset that everything rises or falls **on one game.**

Keep perspective and realize that only 50% of the time your athlete will perform above average. Going crazy over an "off night" helps no one. In fact, it puts pressure on your athlete that can hinder future performances or cause them to burnout.

Count on the fact that there **will** be good performances and there **will** be poor performances. Your job as a parent is to come alongside to encourage and support – each time.

Leave the advice and recommendations for a time when your child is not emotionally compromised from fatigue or disappointment.

3) Careers Are Not Formed In One Season

Just as viewing a season from one day's performance is not productive, it is equally fruitless to plan out a sports career based on one season.

Your child's skills, ambition, work ethic, and physical development can change drastically in one year.

He may go from being small and awkward to strong and large for his age in a very short time and this could greatly impact his performance.

Children also can mature emotionally and mentally quite a bit during this period which would surely influence how they approach training and games.

View your child's sport experience through a macro lens. Enjoy the small moments and realize that the overall sport experience is a compilation of everything good, bad, hard and easy.

4) Behavior and Performance Are Different Issues

Mistakes made during a performance are errors. They may require a teaching conversation, but not disciplinary action from a frustrated parent.

Behavioral issues, on the other hand, do warrant a corrective response from a parent.

Here are some examples of each:

Performance issues:

- Incorrect judgments made during a game
- Lacking endurance during a competition
- Inability to perform skills needed to score

Behavioral issues:

- Disrespect toward the coach, teammates, opponents, or fans
- Temper tantrums or poor sportsmanship
- Negative attitude or comments made

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It is crucial for parents to distinguish between what might simply be a mistake in performance (physical or mental errors) vs. a behavior that hints at a character issue. Then choose feedback that is appropriate.

5) Enjoy, Enjoy, Enjoy

“It will be over before you know it.”

Have you ever heard this?

There is really no other arena that this is truer than in parenting – and the youth sport experience is even shorter.

Don't come to this realization when it is too late.

Enjoy the fun. Enjoy the successes and enjoy the opportunities to learn together. Your long-term relationship with your child is the most important benefit you can gain.

Winning a battle to only lose the war will result in regret for everyone.

Moving Forward

Regardless of where you are in your parenting journey, it is possible to make decisions that can have a lifelong impact.

Consider these 5 lessons and apply them to your perspective of the youth sports experience.

The results could be pivotal for you and your child.

David Benzel is the Founder and Executive Director of [Growing Champions for Life, Inc.](http://www.growingchampionsforlife.com), which provides parents and coaches with practical tools & positive strategies for helping athletes reach their full potential while enjoying the youth sport experience. David is also the author of *"From Chump to Champ - How Individuals Go From Good to Great"* www.growingchampionsforlife.com