



A Parental Guide for Nurturing a Young Athlete

(Adapted from www.usyouthsoccer.org)

How can you, a parent or guardian, make a positive contribution to your child's experience of sport participation? In a recent US survey, approximately 73 percent of children who compete in organized sports quit by age 13. Many drop out because they say the pressure from coaches and parents simply takes all the fun out of playing and competing. Here's what we can do to promote lifelong participation in sports:

- Emphasize effort and fun over winning at all costs. **The kids whose coaches and parents have instilled a life-long love of fitness and sports are the real winners.**
- Don't rehash every detail of the game with your child. Over-analyzing play can take the fun out of it. And focusing only on mistakes can backfire: Some kids will do anything to avoid making another mistake, including not doing anything at all!
- Parents cannot force children to succeed as athletes. The best approach is to allow them to show you whether they have the desire within themselves to compete and excel at a high level. Avoid living vicariously through your children at all costs.
- Realize that the referees, coaches and managers are volunteers who provide a service for your children. Never let your child hear you criticizing the coach other players, or the referee.
- Don't give instructions during a game or practice. It can be extremely confusing to your child and distracting to other parents and fans to hear someone other than the coach yelling out instructions.

Youth sports offer many teachable moments that can enrich a child in the long run. But it is up to us as coaches and parents to ensure that these become positive experiences that lead to a love for the "beautiful game". Then our kids will derive and all the physical and social benefits that come from participating for a lifetime.

Yours in soccer
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TRAIN SMART PLAY HARD HAVE FUN