

Coaching Effectively Your Child's Team

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Volunteer Coaching Tips From Dr. Dina Gentile: Coaching Your Own Child

A coach confronts specific dilemmas and challenges when coaching his/her own child and all eyes are on them and one very special heart.

If you are a volunteer coach chances are that you have your son or daughter on your team. It is challenging to balance coaching and parenting when your child is part of your youth soccer team. The challenges present themselves on both ends of the spectrum from the parent perspective of trying to get the most out of a child as an athlete and also from the child's perspective of trying to understand why the parent is giving attention to other children on the team.

Every parent-coach should start each season explaining to their child that they have a responsibility to the entire team not just to them. Children will have a difficult time getting direction from parents on the playing field and they will also need to get over the amount of interest the parent-coach places on the other members of the team. Every child is accustomed to being the center of their parent's universe and when parents coach a team it may take some time for the child to fully comprehend the different role.

Parent-coaches have an even greater challenge when they must stop being their child's fan and become a teacher for all. Recently at a youth sport game I witnessed an extreme case of favoritism of two players who happened to be playing for their parent-coach. The intent of this developmental team was to have all players experience all positions to get a full understanding and appreciation of the game.

Somehow those intentions were lost because the coach forfeited the worthy objectives in order to elevate their own children by sacrificing the opportunities of all of the other players. Unfortunately this scenario has happened more than one time on this squad and I would imagine could occur across all sports and seasons.

Many parent-coaches may find it difficult to stay true to the mission of the team/league when they coach their own children. The key is to remember why we decided to volunteer to coach. Most parents volunteer to create the most positive sport environment for children. When we can instruct all children equally, we will be effective role models and teachers. Some parent-coaches will be too lenient with their child and some will be too harsh with their child. When parent-coaches can treat all players with kindness and compassion the entire team will profit.

Each child deserves the opportunity to experience the gamut of soccer positions and should not be designated attackers or defenders. Parent-coaches need to realize that even their own child will benefit from experiencing playing in goal to playing forward. If parent-coaches expect players to rotate through the positions then no player should be exempt from that standard.

All parent-coaches should be applauded for their time commitment and efforts over the course of the season. But sometimes we must remind each other that all players need to be treated like they were our own. Co-coaches and assistant coaches should have a voice when another coach places too much emphasis on their own children on a team. In the end, coaches must find the methods to stay true to developing the passion and skill level of all players.

*GoalNation's columnist **Dr. Dina Gentile** is a Professor of Sport Management at Endicott College. A volunteer youth coach herself, Dr. Gentile understands from both practical and theoretical experience what happens on the soccer field. Gentile has also coached the Endicott College Soccer Team for 11 years. Gentile is also the owner/director of Precision Soccer, LLC, which operates camps, clinics, and coach education training throughout the year. She is a former All-American and Academic All-American at Adelphi University. Gentile has been inducted into the Adelphi University and Endicott College Halls of Fame. In addition, she is a trainer with Positive Coaching Alliance and the Girls Program Director with New England Premiership Club – Benfica USA. She is the proud coach of her daughter's and son's soccer teams in her hometown. - See more at: <http://goalnation.com/coaching-effectively-coaching-child/#sthash.OFVfsiaY.dpuf>*