



## Parents are Responsible for Team Success

In today's world of youth sports parents are interwoven into the fabric of the teams their kids play on. This is quite a change from twenty years ago when the kids were dropped off at the rink and picked up a couple hours later. Because parents are so much more involved in the teams, they also have a significant role in the season outcome. By understanding their roles, parents can help their kids have a great season and achieve more than their kids anticipated.

The best way to describe the role of the parents is with a couple analogies we can all relate to and remember. They go like this;

*“As coaches we can take your kids through the season and they will achieve about what they have in the past as a group. For instance, if this group has traditionally finished in the middle of the district each year then we can accomplish the same again this year. If, however, we want to perform at a higher level we need all of the parents to help the coaching staff. Think of coaching like this. Imagine that you are on an airliner heading from Minneapolis to Los Angeles. The plan takes off; you recline in your seat and relax all the way to LA. As far as you know it was an uneventful flight. In fact what is happening in the cockpit is that the pilots (coaches) are constantly checking the progress of the plane. The autopilot is making minor adjustments all through the flight as changing wind speeds, directions and even turbulence cause the plan to deviate off course. The pilots make the corrections to insure you arrive safely. That is what hockey coaches do throughout a long season as they make course adjustments and try to keep the team on track for the final destination. We all know that an airplane receives lift under the wings and warm air helps to provide lift to an aircraft. The opposite is true that cold air is heavy and tends to make flying more difficult. The challenge to parents is to provide positive warm air to the team helping them to soar to new heights. We all know cold air (negativity) only makes the coaching more difficult and hinders the team performance. In some cases the plane (team) will crash with too much cold air around the team. In essence, whether the team reaches its full potential is up to the parents not the coaches”*

The most successful teams I have coached over the past three decades had parents that provided warm air and lift to the team. Without their help there may have never been any state titles or trips to the national tournaments. The parents played a pivotal role in the team successes. I have also experienced the opposite effect.

*“When a parent publicly criticizes the team, coach, officials, players on the team or even their child it is sort of like a pesky mosquito bite. No big deal, the first time. The second time it is like another bite and then another parent joins in and adds a third bite. After a while other parents have joined the negativity and the bites start to add up and then with enough bites the patient (team) begins to bleed. Of course with continued bites the patient(team) eventually bleeds to death and dies a miserable death. Have you ever been part of a team like that?”*

I have seen teams crash a couple times and of course there are no winners in this situation and the kids are the biggest losers. A couple smug parents feel vindicated because they have convinced the other parents that they are smarter than the coaches and it makes sense to disrupt the team. Now why would any parent in their right mind want to ruin the season for their own child and all of the other kids on the team? There are many varied reasons postulated about why parents act this way but none make any sense.

In Jim Thompson’s book, “The Double Goal Coach” he recommends that teams have a “Culture Keeper” that consist of several parents that help to remind the group that sportsmanship and respect matters and that they all can help their kids teams play better, win more games and have more fun. More importantly they are demonstrating the values that are so important for young people to learn as they grow up. More information about how parents can provide positive support for their child, support the coaches and properly deal with any issues of concern can be found at [www.positivecoach.org](http://www.positivecoach.org).

As you start on this year’s journey of youth hockey pledge to make this the best and most fun year your child has ever experienced. Hockey is a great game, for the kids.

See you around the rink...

Hal Tearse  
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