

Five Traits of a Good Youth Sports Coach

June 26, 2013 By [Nathaniel Turner](#) [0 Comments](#)

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Over the past twelve to thirteen years I have been one of those **youth sports** parents. During the decade that my son has been involved in **youth sports**, I have had the fortune and in some cases the misfortune of meeting and examining all types of coaches.

The most important thing that my time as a **youth sports** parent has taught me is that what is considered coaching is too often not coaching at all. Either we need to change the word coach to a more appropriate word or those who apply and accept the awesome role as a coach should do so only after fully appreciating and recognizing their responsibilities.

A Whistle, Clipboard and a Cap

Coaching much like what qualifies as parenting today is inept. Experience has taught me that anyone can go to [Dicks Sporting Goods](#) to purchase a whistle, a clip board and a cap. **Those items alone do not make one a coach.** Moreover, experience has shown that even those who have been wearing the hat and polo with the words “*coach*” imprinted on them for years may be no more prepared to adequately represent the real meaning of coach. Too often youth coaches with “experience” are simply what I call re-run coaches. From season to season, from year to year, they do the same old things with little to no rhyme or reason.

Don't subject your child to this type of coaching. A good coach could be the difference between your child playing a sport that they love while earning a living or watching others play a sport that they love while having to earn a living like you and I – doing something that we just aren't all that passionate about. This summer or in the fall when your child decides to attend team tryout's make sure that you find a coach who possesses the following five qualities:

1. Supporter

A coach should always be a supporter. Like the support beams found in your home, coaches should simply support the blue prints and foundations that you have outlined for your child's life.

The job of a coach should never require that they parent your child for you. A coach should only be required to support the rules and values that you have determined are best for your child.

A coach is one person who spends one to two hours a day with your child and all the other children of the team. Never let the time you spend with your own children have less value and meaning than the time that they spend with one who is supposed to support the wishes, dreams and goals of your household.

2. Growth Mindset

A coach is someone who doesn't have a Fixed Mindset. **A coach should be enlightened enough to know that not all children have the same talents and abilities.**

Often times the varying talents and abilities of young athletes are the consequences of previous poor coaching, early maturation, socio-economic conditions and lack of parental support. Coaches who understand that **where you start is not where you have to finish** will provide your child with the requisite opportunities to grow and reach their goals.

Coaches will always encourage your children to keep their focus on the daily process of improving and not on the results of wins and losses. The coach you want for your children will help your children to understand that wins and losses occur because of individual and team improvement and growth.

3. Youth Sports Professional

A coach is a professional or at least they should be. Let me be clear, I am not suggesting that only someone who played the sport that they are coaching at the professional level should coach your child. What I do advocate is that whomever is coaching your child should care enough about the profession of coaching to treat it like a profession.

How would you feel if your child's Biology teacher never received Continuing Education and taught biology on what she learned in 1975? How would you react if you learned that your child's guidance counselor did not belong to any of the national counseling organizations and had no direct relationships with the colleges and universities that your child hoped to attend?

My guess is that you would find it unacceptable if those trusted with the care and education of your child did not care about their own continuing education. **Coaches should be held to the same responsibility as we expect of our teachers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, accountants and other professionals.**

We expect others who come in contact with our children to continue to learn and improve; we must demand this of youth coaches as well. Too many youth coaches, not only coach for the wrong reasons but they have little knowledge about today's coaching methodologies: sports psychology, sports science, etc.

4. Development

A coach should be able to show you in objective, measurable and qualitative fashion how your child has improved and developed under their coaching.

Youth sports in America is just too expensive to have no idea if you are getting value for the money you spend. Families spend thousands upon thousands of dollars a year so that their children can play a sport.

There is someone with their handout at every turn. From league dues, tournament fees, uniforms, outside training...the costs to be a youth athlete are out of control. Thus, it seems only fair and reasonable for a parent to ask if their child runs slower than other children, how the coach intends to improve their speed. If a child is a poor dribbler, it is logical that a coach will have a plan in place to help your child dribble better. If your child lacks confidence, you should be able to expect that through real, positive and measurable coaching, your child will become confident about their ability.

Your child may not play in college or professionally but you should still expect them to improve and to do so quantifiably and qualitatively. If you are in the habit of giving money away with no requirements, we should talk.

5. Impartial

A coach must be impartial. This is especially important when your child participates in the local community league and private school sports.

The parental/overbearing adult pressure in these organizations is unbelievable. Parents/adults who swear during the parent meetings that they would rather have their right arm cut off before causing pain to a child, will implore every cut throat maneuver known to man to get their child in the starting lineup and/or to be the team's star.

Parents will lie, cheat, bribe and steal so that their child – who by the way doesn't have a snowball's chance in (you know where) of ever playing a professional sport – will get on the field or on the court before yours. All too often, these "salt of the earth" parents will conspire with or attempt to manipulate coaches for the benefit of the nine-year old soccer player who is taller than the other players.

So keep your eyes open. These are parents who hang around the coach after games, who invite the coach for drinks and who occasionally serve the league or school in some authoritarian role. **These parents are treacherous as they will smile in your face only to stab your children in the back as soon as your child's participation threatens their nine-year old's future stardom.**

You need to make sure that you have a coach who is immune to these tactics and subscribes to a personal coaching oath or professional mandate that all parents understand and are expected to abide. As your children get older, finding a coach who understands ethics and impartiality becomes increasingly challenging.

Now you know what to look for when you show up for the first parent meeting. Make sure that your children have a coach the quality of which you expect of all the other professionals in your child's life. You never know what your child can achieve with a good coach but I'm sure you know what happens when they get an average or below coach. **Children are exceptional, they should never be given anything that is average.**