

The Sport-Parent Paradox – Less is More

By David Benzel

GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports

I was recently asked, "In what way must the parents of athletically gifted children behave differently than the parents of average performing children?" The implication was that if your child looks like the next Pele' certainly your job must be taken more seriously and more effort must be exerted. After all, parents have a responsibility to help their kids get to the highest level of achievement possible and therefore, do whatever it takes.

I've come to believe the answer to this question - and the assumption tied to it - is far more paradoxical than what most parents guess.

It's true that the more competitive and ambitious the child, the more effort must be put into the logistical aspect of being a sport parent. There are more miles to drive, more practices to attend, more tournaments to afford, and more equipment to purchase.

Unfortunately, the tendency is to also elevate performance expectations and increase the pressure to deliver that performance - especially **because** of the enhanced investment being made. It's so common to see and hear the almost agent-like behavior of well-meaning parents as they coach, push, criticize, and manipulate their child's athletic career into shape.

In truth, these elevated parental expectations and increased performance pressures actually decrease the chances for an athlete of reaching his or her full potential, as well as maintaining a healthy perspective on life, family, and sport over the long haul. The irony is that, other than logistically speaking, less is more!

When the parents of athletically gifted children are able to increase their support without increasing their pressure to perform, a young athlete has an increased probability of achieving fearless and uninhibited play. When emotional support and unconditional love is abundant, and given without a hint of disappointment or disapproval after a sub-par performance, an athlete's brain let's an athlete's body do what it does best....perform!

Our job as parents, regardless of our child's potential, is to teach life lessons in such a way that instills confidence over fear, independence over dependence, responsibility instead of victimization, and a love for learning what works in life. Our young athletes will experience enough pressure from coaches, teammates, and from themselves without our help as overbearing parents. There must be one safe place where total acceptance is ever-present, with no strings attached. Home should be that place, where less is more.

[CLICK HERE](#) to ask David Benzel a question about this topic:
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David Benzel is the Founder and Executive Director of [Growing Champions for Life, Inc.](#), 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