

Coaching Your Own Child

Most parents at some point in their child's youth sport experience will be asked to volunteer as a coach. Often parents are hesitant to become a coach because of time constraints or fear of the inherent difficulties involved with coaching youth sport. As youth sport administrators, AIA Academy Trainers, and parent coaches, Duane Nelson and Bobbie Jones answered several questions that are commonly asked by youth sport parents. From their own experiences, they provided some interesting insights about being both a youth sport coach and parent.

Q: *What do you feel are the benefits of coaching your own child?*

Duane: I know what kind of coaching he will be getting. Not that I am the best coach, but I know that he will be taught the basics of that sport, the rules and good sportsmanship, and he will get a quality experience.

Bobbie: The biggest benefit of coaching my own children was spending quality time with them in an active environment. Secondly, it was a great feeling to see their sense of accomplishment on their faces when a skill was accomplished, attained or executed.

Q: *Are there any negatives to coaching your own child? If so, which did you experience?*

Duane: Sometimes I have higher expectations of my son because I know that he was taught the basics and was exposed to things that maybe other youth are not. Also, another negative is that I coached one of my sons for several years in baseball. Therefore, he was not exposed to other coaching styles, techniques and experiences.

Bobbie: The negatives are small, but are there, and you have to be prepared. At least once during the coaching experience, my child had an emotional outburst that would probably not have occurred if "Mom" wasn't standing right there. My son expressed the feeling that he wanted a "real coach" and another time he expressed wanting a "regular mom." The solution was to have my son drilled by other coaches during practices, so he could feel that he was being evaluated and praised by someone other than "just my mom."

Q: *Do you feel that coaching your child has strengthened your relationship with your child?*

Duane: The amount of time I spent coaching my sons has been great. It really has given us time together that we would not normally have spent together.

Bobbie: Absolutely! We had something to talk about when we were away from the field. We could review the best moves, the funniest moves, the weirdest moves, etc., from games and practices.



Q: *Would you suggest that parents volunteer to coach their child? Or, should parents volunteer to coach a team other than their child's if they really want to coach?*

Duane: I would strongly suggest that parents get involved in coaching their children, but with the understanding that they are doing it for the right reasons and that they provide them with a quality experience. These days families have very busy schedules, so there typically is not much time they can spend together. Coaching gives a parent and child some additional time to be together.

Bobbie: Yes, but parents really, really have to be prepared to step back if necessary and accept their child's emotional rollercoaster as much as they would accept any other child's moods. The parents have to be willing to accept a secondary position to all of their own hopes and dreams and focus on what is best for their child and all of the other children on the team. This is truly a hard technique to put into practice.

Q: *Would you coach your child again if the opportunity arose?*

Duane: Absolutely!

Bobbie: In a heartbeat!

Q: *Do you have any recommendations for parents planning to coach their child for the first time?*

Duane: I feel that proper coach training is a must. I have seen too many bad coaches ruin the sport experience for children and many of them didn't know that they were doing it. Also, I would suggest that they work with an experienced coach before jumping in as a head coach. They will learn practice techniques, strategy, and overall coaching tips that will only enhance the child's sport experience.

Bobbie: Be prepared, go to training, find a good mentor to shadow for the first year. Do not try to tackle the job alone. Be willing to share your child with another assistant coach. You are not the only one that can teach your child good fundamentals, but you are probably the biggest influence on how much enjoyment your child has in the youth sports experience!

The AIA Academy encourages all parents to consider taking the opportunity to volunteer as a coach. When coaching, keep in mind that the objectives of youth sport are to:

- Promote a healthy and physically active lifestyle
- Promote the development of sportsmanship and character
- Help athletes learn important lessons for life
- Create a developmentally appropriate youth sport experience
- Create positive feelings about an enjoyable sporting experience
- Develop fundamental sport skills

