

Be a True Team Parent

By Susan Epaves Karel

If your child plays sports, your child will have many different coaches before his or her athletic career is completed. Most, if not all of those coaches will be unpaid volunteers.

Just like you, they have jobs, perhaps two or more children, household chores and plenty of demands on their time.

Coaches who coach year after year do it because they enjoy the sport and they love working with children.

They miss meals, their homes or yards will never be showcased in House Beautiful, and they go to work early so they can get away in time to make it to the field or gym before your child arrives.

What is the most frequent complaint of these men and women who shape your child's lifelong attitude about sports and teamwork?

Parents.

How can you avoid becoming one of "those" parents? How can you help your child's coach continue to love his job?

Here are a few suggestions that will make your coaches job a whole lot easier:

- Practice with your child at home. There is no way that a coach can give each child as much individual attention as most young athletes require.
- Learn not only the rules of the game, but familiarize yourself with special adaptations used in your child's league.
- Be prompt! Arrive before practice is scheduled to end. The coach is a coach, not a baby-sitter or chauffeur. Don't expect the coach to transport your child to practices or games.
- Make sure your child arrives at practices and games on time, dressed and ready to play.
- Make sure your child has all of the proper equipment, ESPECIALLY A WATER BOTTLE.
- Attend your child's games and be an active supporter. Cheer for players, even those on the other team.
- Talk to your child about being a good sport.
- Don't criticize the referee/umpire, coach or other players in front of your child.
- Don't criticize the referee/umpire, coach at all, unless you will do their job next season.
- Don't heap lavish praise or too much criticism on you child: Keep comments

positive and upbeat. Point out the things that your child, AND HIS TEAMMATES, did well.

- Let your child see that you enjoy the game. If you have a concern and need to talk to the coach, be considerate. During a game is not the time, most coaches are busy with the team. If you catch them before practice be brief, there are several children waiting for him.

There is no reason to buy the coach a gift at the end of the season, giving the coach a helping hand when needed and a sincere "Thank you," at season's end really is sufficient.

Your volunteer coach has already been paid, you just missed it.

It came in the middle of the season, when your child made the pass, caught the ball, made the block or got the rebound...and smiled.