

USA Hockey's CEP Program

Coaches Clipboard

Most of us have coached our own child at some point. Here is some good advice regarding this sensitive subject. This article appeared originally in USA Hockey's new online magazine. The link for this new magazine is <http://www.usahockeymagazine.com>check it out!!

Coaching Your Kid's Team

By: Harry Thompson

Most parents coach their kids' hockey team because they want to spend quality time together with their son or daughter. Others want to give back to the game, or because they learned the game from their parents. While all parents get involved with coaching their kid's team for all the right reasons, there are times when their hearts may get in the way of doing what's best for the team as a whole, or even doing what's best for their child. Some may feel that since they're going to be at the rink anyway, why not help out on the ice. Unlike many European countries, where coaches are paid professionals, the volunteer coach is the backbone of youth hockey in the United States.

Pick your spots to offer instruction to your child

As parents, we all know that our child has an on/off switch that they control to listen or ignore us. It's no different when you're a coach. Sometimes it may be better to have one of the other coaches offer instruction to our children.

Separate your relationship as parent/child and coach/player

Talk about your relationship as father and son/daughter as well as coach and player before the season begins. Know that there are times to talk about hockey and times to discuss other things, such as school, friends or family matters. Work on keeping those relationships separate.

Don't single out your child in practices or games

Conversely, don't go out of your way to point out every time your son or daughter makes a mistake, or use him or her as the "whipping boy" when things aren't going well in practices or games. Be fair to all players and try to treat everyone equally.

Ask your kids what they want

Talk to your son/daughter about what their expectations are for the season. More than likely, having fun with their friends will be high on the list. Do everything in your power to make sure those goals are met, for every player on the team. Along the way, if you win a few games, develop every player's skills and make some new friends, all the better.

Don't show favoritism toward your child

Most of us didn't get involved in coaching to ensure that our kid is on the power play. Of course there will always be rumblings from the bleachers if that happens. As a coach, communicate with your players and parents to avoid any suspicion of favoritism when it comes to ice time, linemates or special teams assignments.

Keep your expectations grounded in reality

Many parents with good intentions let youth sports drive a wedge in the relationship they have with their child. Take a step back and see if your expectations and interaction are age appropriate. If not, make a change in your approach. You may think that your child could be the next Patrick Kane or Cammi Granato but you must keep in mind that the odds are against you.

For more information on the USA Hockey Coaching Education Program, go to http://www.usahockey.com/Template_USAHockey.aspx?Nav=CO&ID=19344

For more information on the USA Hockey ACE Program, go to http://www.usahockey.com//Template_Usahockey.aspx?NAV=CO_06&ID=19620.

For comments, or suggestions for future topics for "Coaches Clipboard" contact Chuck Gridley at chuckgridley@aol.com.