Start the Year Right:
Get Parents on Your Team

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Heard from Parents:

“I was not a swimmer. I just want the coach to explain what is going on at practice.”

“It seems like all they do is swim laps. Are they learning anything?”

“Why are they always kicking? I want to see her swimming!”

“I think my 8 year old could go to the Olympics. He has the drive and wins everything and look at that great swimmer body!”

“My daughter is swimming so she can get a scholarship to college.”

“Why won’t the coach let my 10 year old come to practice every day and swim with the older kids?”

“Why does the head coach only coach the teenagers? I think he should coach all of the kids.”

“Swimming takes so much time. Is it worth it?”
The Resource:
• For this talk
• For your parent education

Coach Objectives and Challenges
1. I seek the overall development of each child
2. I act in the best interest of ALL children in the program
3. I balance the needs of the individual with the needs of the group
4. I need parents to share the commitment to the team goals and philosophy
Parental Objectives and Challenges

1. My child is much more important to me than any other child in the program
2. My child’s happiness and success is more important than team goals or achievement
3. I am paying $$$$ and expect my money’s worth

2 Choices in Dealing with Parents

**Reactive**
- Crisis Intervention Model
- Parents are “bad”
- Putting out fires
- React with anger, rules, aggression

**Proactive**
- Ongoing Enlightenment Model
- Parents are “good”
- Parents want to be “on the team”
Which Model are You?

1. I try to avoid contact with most parents.
2. I meet with parents when there is something urgent to discuss.
3. I communicate with parents mainly via email.
4. I have one big parents’ meeting at the beginning of the season. That’s all I need.
5. I have a planned Parent Education program for the season.

Starting the Year

• The Honeymoon Period
• Your Window of Opportunity
Parents Behaving Badly

- 2%
- Why do families join your team?
- Causes:
  - “Ignorance”
  - Over-involvement
  - Needing attention
  - Their $$ and their children

Your Job

- You teach inexperienced athletes.............
- Ongoing, throughout the year
- “But I don’t have time....”
- The 2%?
Coach to Parent Communication

- Methods
  - Website
  - Email
  - Hard Copy Newsletters
  - Blast Email
  - Bulletin Boards
  - Office Hours
  - Social Events
  - Phone Calls
  - One on one

- Meetings
  - New Parent Meeting
  - Beginning of Season, entire team
  - Training Group Meetings
  - Pre-event meetings
  - Wrap-up meeting
  - Planned, ongoing educational sessions

Communication Effectiveness

Most Effective

Two Way

- One on One
- Small Group
- Large Group
- Telephone
- E-Mail

One Way

- Speech
- Handwritten note
- Letter Personal/Business
- Newsletter
- Blast e-mail
- Website

Least Effective

Source: BoardSource, Sandy Hughes
Written Communication

• Proofread
• Who writes well? You? An assistant?
• Handouts from Successful Sport Parenting

Understanding a Young Athlete’s Physical Growth and Development...

1. Individuals follow a predictable pattern of physical growth but the rate at which children and youth go through this growth varies by individual.

   • During the childhood phase, children grow about 2.5 in./yr. and gain about 5 lb./yr.
   • Peak velocity of growth occurs during puberty/adolescence.
   • Athletes of the same chronological age can vary by as much as 5 biological years, especially during adolescence. Therefore, with two 11-year-old swimmers, one may be 10 and the other 15, biologically. Talk about competing on uneven playing fields!

Recommendation: Educate athletes regarding growth cycles so they understand what is happening to their bodies. Be sure that athletes have regular physical check-ups.

2. Performance can be influenced by rate of maturity, which is out of the athlete’s control. Some young athletes, therefore, have a performance advantage over others.

   • Initially, early matures have a physical size advantage and often perform better than late matures. These individuals experience more early success due to a physical growth advantage and not necessarily enhanced skills or abilities.
   • Conversely, late matures experience failure and frustration because they are physically “behind” their same-age (chronological) peers.
   • Adolescent awkwardness due to rapid physical growth affects performance, especially for early matures.
"When I Have a Meeting, No One Comes....."

- What’s the carrot?
  - New coaches
  - Meet schedule
  - Team outfitting
  - Video
  - Social...food!
  - A “teaser” announcement
- Educate a few and spread the word

The Meeting Killers

- Same Meeting every year
  - Experienced parents are bored
  - New parents are confused
- The Volunteer Sign-up List
  - Survey
  - Online
  - Phone calls
New Parent Meeting

• “Required Attendance”
  – Welcome
  – Your background
  – Your philosophy
  – Introduce the coaches in person
  – Introduce Parent Board
  – Highlight written material

New Parent Meeting

• In Writing and on Website
  – Team Philosophy
  – Mission
  – Basic Team Rules
  – How to communicate with coaches
  – Where to get information
  – Fee structure
  – Meet Schedule and Entry Procedure
  – Facility and Safety Issues
  – Team Structure
  – Outfitting and Equipment
  – Expectations of Parents
General Meeting

Depending on Team Size.....by Training Group

Restate your Philosophy and Team Mission
Introduce Coaches.... speak for 60 sec.

General Team Goals for the season such as:

1. A big team meet or hosted event
2. Enhanced communication: new website
3. Team outfitting.....a new look
4. What you are excited about
5. Upcoming educational calendar

What can parents do to help?

Handouts....meet schedule, volunteer survey
Volunteer Survey

Volunteers are an integral part of every aspect of youth sports. Volunteering is a great opportunity to share your child’s experience, have fun, meet new friends and make a valuable contribution.

Outlined below are a variety of ways that parents can choose to be involved. Please complete the requested information and indicate your areas of interest.

New Family ______ or Returning Family ______
Child’s Name ____________________________
Child’s Name ____________________________
Child’s Name ____________________________
Family E-Mail Address (for weekly newsletter) ____________________________
Father’s Name ____________________________
Occupation ____________________________ Company ____________________________
Day Phone ____________________________ Night Phone ____________________________
Cell Phone ____________________________ (Please list 10-digits for all phone numbers).
Mother’s Name ____________________________

Educational Season Plan

• Topics
  – Written or face to face
  – By Training Group/Entire Team
• How many per month:
  – Face to face: publish a calendar
  – Written: editorial calendar
• Conducted by:
  – Head Coach
  – Assistant Coach
  – Outside Speaker
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Group</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Developed By</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Scheduled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>What is going on in swim practice?</td>
<td>Novice Coach</td>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>Sept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swim Meets are crazy!</td>
<td>Novice Coach</td>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>Oct...before 1st meet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td>What is the difference between the groups?</td>
<td>AG Coach</td>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>Sept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early and Late Maturers...so what?</td>
<td>AG Coach</td>
<td>Handout...SSP</td>
<td>Oct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td>I’m not seeing best times...why not?</td>
<td>AG Coach</td>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>Nov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>The Season Plan</td>
<td>Senior Coach</td>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>Sept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fueling for Training and Competition</td>
<td>Senior Coach or outside speaker</td>
<td>Meeting with Handouts</td>
<td>Oct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Topics for Novice Parents

- Basic rules of swimming
- Benefits of participation at the novice level
- What your child is learning and doing at practice
- Basic expectation for being a team member: the swimmer and the parent
- Team structure
- Team admin and governance
- How to help and volunteer
- Growth and development of young children
- Reasonable expectations of progress
- Are you a pressure parent?
## Topics for Age Group Parents

- Benefits of participation at this level
- What your child is learning at practice
- Growth and dev: childhood to adolescence/puberty
- Goal setting
- Levels of training: changing groups
- Levels of competition
- Reasonable expectations
- Parental commitment to swimming
- Volunteering
- Basic nutrition
- Intro to drugs and supplements
- Long term development
- Coach-athlete-parent: roles and communication
- Dealing with success and disappointment
- Are you a pressure parent?

## Topics for Senior Parents

- Body changes/puberty
- Nutrition for training and recovery
- Injury prevention
- Reaching the elite level
- Plateaus and taper
- Season and long term focus
- College recruiting
- Sport psychology
- Dealing with success and disappointment
- Swimming commitment vs other activities
- Optimal push vs letting go
- Drugs and Supplements
- Swimmer-coach-parent communication
- Are you a pressure parent?
Growth and Development: A topic you cannot ignore!

Include:

• Early maturers vs late maturers
  – Physical characteristics
  – Implications to training and competition

• Gender differences in development
Long Term Development
A topic you cannot ignore!

Periodization of Training

- Generalized 6 - 14 years
  - Initiation 6 - 10 years
  - Pre-puberty
- Specialized 15 years +
  - Athletic Formation 11 - 14 years
  - Puberty
  - Post-puberty and Adolescence
- Maturity
  - Specialization 15 - 18 years
  - High Performance 19 years +

Include

- What to expect at each level
- Progressive training
- Progressive competition
- Progressive stroke development
- Progressive commitment
Are You a Pressure Parent?

1. Is Winning More Important To You or Your Child?
2. Is Your Disappointment Obvious?
3. Can Only You “Psyche Up” Your Child?
4. Is Winning The Only Way Your Child Can Enjoy Sports?
5. Do You Conduct Post Mortems After Competition or Practice?
6. Do You Feel You Have To Force Your Child To Practice?
7. Can You Do Better Coaching Your Own Child?
8. Do You Dislike Your Child’s Opponents?
9. Are Your Child’s Goals More Important To You?
10. Do You Provide Material Rewards For Performances?

STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS

PARENT BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST

Rate each statement on a scale of 1 to 5. Think about how your child or your child’s coach would rate you. Add the ratings to see how effective you are in being a youth sport parent.

1. Do I emphasize the development of my child and not just his or her winning?
2. Do I have unrealistic expectations for my child or as an athlete?
3. Do I rarely criticize my child for his or her sport?
4. Do I allow my child to be responsible for his or her sport preparations (meaning I do not do everything for my child including carrying bags, getting water, preparing equipment)?
5. Do I avoid trying to coach my child?
6. Do I provide and support recognition of the performance outcome?
7. Do I emphasize the importance of hard work with my child?
8. Do I expose my child to different sports?
9. Do I keep success in perspective?
10. Do I encourage my child to seek out new challenges and opportunities?
11. Do I avoid setting pressure to win?
12. Do I model an active lifestyle?
13. Do I emphasize core values like if you are going to do it, do it right?
14. Do I provide transportation, uniforms, and logistical support?
15. Do I provide considerable encouragement by recognizing what my child does right?
16. Do I try to make the sport fun?
17. Do I avoid focusing the majority of our conversations on the child’s sport?
18. Do I let others make my child feel like he or she competes?
Parent Education..... Can you really afford not to do it?

Get started.....now!
Questions?