

Parental Support - The Key to Peak Performance

The role that parents play in the life of a soccer player has a tremendous impact on their experience. With this in mind, we have taken some time to write down some helpful reminders for all of us as we approach the upcoming season. If you should have any questions about these thoughts, please feel free to discuss it with us, the coaches.

1. **Let the coaches coach:** Leave the coaching to the coaches. This includes motivating, psyching your child for practice, after game critiquing, setting goals, requiring additional training, etc. You have entrusted the care of your player to these coaches and they need to be free to do their job. If a player has too many coaches, it is confusing for him and his performance usually declines.

SELIM: I have a coaching philosophy and stick by it. I emphasize teaching technical and fundamental aspects of the game and develop players to become smart, persevering, and team-oriented competitors. I aim to foster a learning environment in which there is positive team chemistry, everyone is having fun, and players show a willingness to take chances. The methods I using in emphasizing or teaching the principles of soccer may vary each season and may be different for certain teams and players. One consistent method by which I coach is through positive reinforcement and encouragement but it is important to point out that even this method is not absolute with all players. I like everyone to know my philosophy so that there is no confusion or disconnect with coaches, parents, and players.

2. **Support the program:** Get involved. Volunteer. Help out with fundraisers, car-pool; anything to support the program.
3. **Be your child's best fan:** Support your child unconditionally. Do not withdraw love when your child performs poorly. Your child should *never* have to perform to win your love.
4. **Support and root for all players on the team:** Foster teamwork. Your child's teammates *are not* the enemy. When they are playing better than your child, your child now has a wonderful opportunity to learn.
5. **Do not bribe or offer incentives:** Your job is *not* to motivate. Leave this to the coaching staff. Bribes will distract your child from properly concentrating in practice and game situations.
6. **Encourage your child to talk with the coaches:** If your child is having difficulties in practice or games, or can't make a practice, etc., encourage *them* to speak directly to the coaches. This "responsibility taking" is a big part of becoming a big-time player. By handling the off-field tasks, your child is claiming ownership of all aspects of the game - preparation for as well as playing the game.

SELIM: I realize that this is a lot to ask for from 9-12 year olds but I do think that it is an important lesson for life. Please ease this process along by reminding and urging your child to communicate with the coach. For instance, please encourage your son to notify the coach themselves if they have to miss a practice.

7. **Understand and display appropriate game behavior:** Remember, your child's self esteem and game performance is at stake. Be supportive, cheer, be appropriate. To perform to the best of his abilities, a player needs to focus on the parts of the game that they can control (his fitness, positioning, decision making, skill, aggressiveness, what the game is presenting them). If he starts focusing on what he can not control (the condition of the field, the referee, the weather, the opponent, even the outcome of the game at times), he will not play up to his ability. If he hears a lot of people telling him what to do, or yelling at the referee, it diverts his attention away from the task at hand.

SELIM: As a parent your role is to support your child and the team, always remembering to be positive. Your role is not to provide direction to your child or other players.

8. **Monitor your child's stress level at home:** Keep an eye on the player to make sure that they are handling stress effectively from the various activities in his life.
9. **Monitor eating and sleeping habits:** Be sure your child is eating the proper foods and getting adequate rest.
10. **Help your child keep his priorities straight:** Help your child maintain a focus on schoolwork, relationships and the other things in life beside soccer. Also, your child has made a commitment to soccer, help him fulfill his obligation to the team.

SELIM: Travel soccer is demanding for parents and players. Make sure that you are aware of the commitment necessary (time, patience, money, flexibility, etc.) and ensure your child wants to make this commitment.

11. **Reality test:** If your child has come off the field when his team has lost, but he has played his best, help him to see this as a "win". Remind him that he is to focus on "process" and not "results". His fun and satisfaction should be derived from "striving to win". Conversely, he should be as satisfied from success that occurs despite inadequate preparation and performance.
12. **Keep soccer in its proper perspective:** Soccer should not be larger than life for you. If your child's performance produces strong emotions in you, suppress them. Remember your relationship will continue with your children *long after* their competitive soccer days are over. Keep *your* goals and needs separate from your child's experience.
13. **Have fun:** That is what we will be trying to do! We will try to challenge your child to reach past their "*comfort level*" and improve themselves as a player, and thus, a person. We will attempt to do this in environments that are fun, yet challenging. We look forward to this process. We hope you do to!