



Parenting in youth sport: A position paper on parenting expertise

Executive Statement: This paper summarized research evidence of sport parenting, which has shown 6 key ways that parents can help their children achieve their sporting potential and develop physical, social, and life skills through participation in youth sport.

Introduction: Recently there has been a large amount of studies done on youth sport, and researchers have begun to look into the role parents play in helping their child have a positive youth sport experience. However the research has not been collected to create a unified explanation of ideal sport parenting behaviours. To address this gap, the authors reviewed research on the topic of sport parenting and created a position on the concept of sport parenting expertise.

Methods: After presenting a statement on sport parenting expertise, researchers reviewed and interpreted literature on parenting in youth sport. From the literature, they compiled 6 main components that are imperative to sport parenting expertise.

Results: Six postulates were proposed: (1) parents select the appropriate sporting opportunities for their child and provide necessary types of social support, (2) parents understand and apply an authoritative or autonomy-supportive parenting style, (3) parents manage the emotional demands of competition and serve as emotionally intelligent role models for their child, (4) parents foster and maintain healthy relationships with significant others in the youth sport environment, (5) parents manage the organizational and developmental demands placed on them as stakeholders in youth sport, and (6) expert parents adapt their involvement and support to different stages of their child's athletic development and progressions.

The first postulate suggests parents should create opportunities for their children to participate in a range of fun and enjoyable activities with minimal competition. They should also share and communicate their sport participation goals with their children, and provide emotional, tangible, and informational support for their children. The second postulate recommends that parents set clear and consistent boundaries with their child but allows them to choose how they act within those boundaries. It is also important that both parents use the same parenting style. The third postulate proposes that parents need to find coping strategies to manage their emotions while watching their children play, as well as be a role model for their child by showcasing sportspersonship, and appreciating effort and honesty. The fourth postulate advises that parents should create healthy relationships with other



parents and coaches so that they have a resource for when they reach new situations as a sport parent. The fifth postulate suggests that parents learn organizational strategies to better manage their children's sporting activities. The last postulate recommends that parents adapt their involvement as their child transitions to new levels of sport competition, and that they change their support to match their child's needs.

Conclusion: A summary of youth sport research suggests that sport parenting expertise is demonstrated through parental involvement that increases the chances for children to develop a range of positive developmental outcomes, have a positive psychosocial experience, and achieve their sporting potential. Expert sport parents should balance the responsibilities of managing and supporting their child's needs, themselves, and their interactions within youth sport.

Implications/recommendations: Sport organizations should strive to strengthen the skills of parents to help them achieve sport parenting expertise and thus create a healthier youth sport experience. Practitioners and youth sport organizers should be aware of the demands placed on a sport parent and they should provide education and support to parents lacking the necessary skills to acquire expertise, through workshops, meetings, and online resources.

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