

The *MAGICAL PILL*

For some, this information will be a tough pill to swallow. But then again, truth and reality usually are hard to take. It is much easier to take a short cut or sacrifice our morals, ethics and character if it means our son or daughter will get the "brass ring" sooner. It doesn't matter that all we are doing is essentially cheating our kids, by trying to fast-track them to stardom. But in most cases all you have accomplished is to drive a wedge in your relationship with your child and attached a false sense of self-esteem to it.

This information if used properly will require that some parents make some minor adjustments in their attitudes and beliefs about sports and their son or daughter. Others however will need a complete overhaul. Don't worry, it will be ok – what parent wouldn't want to do what is right for their child? Now, the choice is up to you.

First, you will need to understand and accept that sports is a small portion of a child's life. Or at least it should be. If you can't accept this fact and make a change, there probably is no need to read further. If your life revolves around child's sport activities, if your child's sports activities are the dominate subject of conversation that you have with family and friends, if you find yourself lost if you are not going to a sports activity, please stop and **SEEK HELP**. Really, what you need to do is wake up. Please understand that when your son or daughter's sports career is over and if sports was the one and possibly only bond that you have between yourselves, you are in real trouble. The truth is, sports should be a part of your life, not the point of your life.

The relationship that you have with your son or daughter is one of the most special things that life can offer. Please don't be one of the countless mothers or fathers that damages or ruins a relationship with their child because of their sports performance or accomplishments.

Now, if you truly care, want to make a change and a difference in your child's sports experience and your relationship with your son or daughter, please read on.

- ❖ Regardless of whether your child is 5 or 18, you must develop a **CHILD-CENTERED** mentality and philosophy, i.e... the program is and should be for the kids. It is not about mom or dad. It doesn't matter if you were a great athlete during your time or that your name is splattered all over the HS record books. This is your son or daughter's time. Let them develop, mature and progress for themselves, not what you want or expect them to be.
- ❖ Kids want 3 things out of sports. Well, really four but we will talk about the fourth item later. What kids really want out of sports is, (1) to learn the skills of the sport, (2) participate (for those that need further explanation - **THEY WANT TO PLAY**) and (3) they want to have **FUN**. Oh, but hold it, what about winning, getting that big trophy and reading about how great were are in the newspaper? Wake up - that's what some mom's and dad's want. You see, some parents are not satisfied with sports unless they can read about how their son or daughter was the star of the team, won the league and then go around and tell anybody and everybody how great their kid is. You want a dose of reality - most don't care.
- ❖ Be **REALISTIC** of your son or daughters abilities and understand the importance of the team. Very few kids will shine, night in and night out. In fact, some kids play sports just to play and have fun. And if your son or daughter is the star, just remember - they didn't do this on their own. They had "teammates." And what happens if your son or daughter doesn't have a "staring role" or is more of a role player for the team - someone that has a specific responsibility and isn't really in the spotlight. So what - their accomplishments are just as important as anyone else's. Be proud of these and let them know it. Bottom line, it is ok to be an "average player", a person that goes out and does their job to the best of their abilities.
- ❖ If you want to brag, if you want to complain, if you want to critique, if you want to criticize, if you want to second guess - the performance of your child, the performance of anyone else's child, a coach, a referee or official, etc..., do it in the privacy of your own house, preferably when you are alone. Most don't want to hear it or don't care to hear it.
- ❖ Speaking of hearing - if you can be heard yelling instructions, criticism or comments to players, coaches or officials, you have a problem. You are now entering into the #1 problem area in all of sports - **sports rage**. Learn how to deal with anger, adversity and disappointment and keep your mouth shut. Most around you already think you are an idiot, they just don't have the nerve to say it to you and possibly get into a confrontational situation. Do everyone a favor - keep your comments to yourself.

- ❖ **Do you feel better after yelling and screaming at an umpire or referee?** Maybe the thing you should be most concerned with is the embarrassment you are imposing on yourself, your family, your team and your son or daughter. How moronic is it to see some mom or dad in the stands or some coach throwing a full blown hissy-fit because they didn't like some call that a sports official made? Is this the message you really want to send to the kids – if you don't like something get all upset, angry and challenge the person in authority. Want to help your son or daughter develop a trait of disrespect for persons in authority??? Sit on the sidelines and yell and scream at every call or non-call made by an official. Heavens, what parent or coach doesn't know more than any official? But be prepared, the next time you, a teacher or a police officer asks/requests that your son or daughter does something, will they react in a confrontational manner??? Wonder where they learned that!!! Here is another question for you – how many of those “so called experts” have actually officiated a game in their life? Less than 10%. One last question. If it is so easy and your level of expertise is so great, why aren't you out there????
- ❖ The fourth item that was mentioned earlier (get ready because this is one of those tough swallowing parts), kids want their coaches and especially their parents to be a positive role model and set a good example. What parent doesn't want their son or daughter to grow up and be civil, respectful, understanding, tolerant, kind, forgiving - need we go on??? But when mom or dad is sitting there yelling and screaming at them, the other players, the coaches or the officials, what kind of message are we sending. Kids want their parents to show **GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP**. Don't be an embarrassment to your child by being the loud-mouth in the stands.
- ❖ Want to kill a team??? Just go around town and bad mouth the players or coaches. Want to kill a team??? Just tell your son or daughter how crappy his or her teammates are or how stupid the coach is.
- ❖ Leave the coach alone. Generally this situation boils down to a team that is not winning or mom / dad thinks that their child should be playing more or playing instead of someone else on the team. Most coaches are trying to the best of their abilities. Yes, there are some "average" coaches out there but most are really in it for the kids - or at least they should be. Leave the coach alone and let him or her do their job. If you feel that you need to discuss something with a coach, ask for a time to set up a meeting. But understand, there are some things that are off limits when talking to coaches - playing time and playing positions. And if you want to bring up that your child is "better than that kid," you have really crossed the line. Bottom line, if you are dissatisfied and the circumstances allow for a situation that you could coach - step up next time.
- ❖ Realize that disappointment and adversity are a part of life and very important "life lessons." In just about each and every athletic contest, there will be a winner and a loser. The same holds true for calls made by officials. Half will be happy, half will be mad (several other words could have been substituted). So what - life moves on. Learn to deal with disappointment and adversity and how important these emotions can be and use it to your advantage. Successful individuals use disappointment and adversity as motivational tools. Unfortunately, some use them as a crutch.
- ❖ When the game is over – **THE GAME IS OVER**. Rehashing it on the car ride home or making it the subject of conversation with your child for the next hour is idiotic. Kids don't want or need the “post-game analysis” from mom or dad. In fact most don't want to hear it period. Coaches should use the mistakes from the game as a learning tool and develop a practice plan.

When it is all said and done, make sure that both during and after your child's sports experience, they understand that your acceptance and love for them is unconditional, regardless of how they performed. Again mom / dad, your relationship with and love for your child is one of the most precious things that you will have during your time. Don't let something as inconsequential as a game or sports mess it up. Now the choice is yours!!! Do you need change?!?!?!

Now go find your son or daughter, give them a big hug and tell them that you love them. Then go do something fun together, something that is non-sport.