THE ROLE OF PARENTS, COACHES, AND ATHLETES

From the perspective of athletes

By Bruce E. Brown
Bruce E. Brown - Background

- Athletic Director, Coach, and Teacher at Northwest College in Kirkland
- Coached Football, Basketball, Baseball, and Volleyball
- Worked at the Junior High, High School, Junior College and College Levels
Bruce E. Brown

Background

- Teacher and Coach for 30 years in the Lake Washington and Bellevue School Districts
- National spokesman for the NAIA and “Champions of Character Program”
- Clinician-speaking to athletes, coaches, parents, and corporations
- Employed by the NFL for twenty-two years
How much has kids changed?

• The athletes have changed very little, but the parents have changed dramatically.
  – Overemphasis on sports at the expense of sportsmanship and support.
  – Many are concerned with attracting the attention of college scouts than enjoying the high school years and letting the advancement to college takes its own path.
How much has kids changed?

- Athletes focusing on a single sport year round face more pressure for success in that sport.

- Parents make larger financial investments in private tutors, conditioning coaches and “select” out of season teams to ensure that their athlete gets as much an advantage as possible.
How much has kids changed?

- Athletes routinely transfer to play with better players or for a specific program where they will be more easily “seen”.

- With loyalty only for their own child, these shortsighted adults have been one of the main causes of coaching turnover and burnout.
How much has kids changed?

• Athletes want us to be part of the fun, inherently part of the sport.
What can parents do?

• Help your athlete reach their goals and improve performance.

• Athletic experience can provide tremendous positive development if handled correctly with both parent and coach working together for the benefit of the athlete.
Starting a young child out athletically...

- "Joint Venture"-experience this together and requirement for the parent to be involved.
- Athletics becomes a tie, level of communication, something that is shared.
- Main goal for young children is to please their parents.
Starting a young child out athletically...

- The parent is a credible source of knowledge, everything you say as a parent is right and you like it.
- 70% of all young people are finished competing in a team sport activity by the age 12.
Starting a young child out athletically...

• It becomes even more important that the parent as early as possible do what they can do to allow growth, help performance and keep perspective.
Athlete enters Adolescence.

• Learning when and how to diminish your involvement becomes an issue for both parent and athlete.

• Stay close, but focus on their needs. Especially in athletics, this is their time.
All Adults need to do their part...
Ask your athlete questions about...

Why they play?

What their goals and roles are?

- Once you know they are safe physically and emotionally, release them to the experience (the game, the team, and the coach).
- During the game, model poise and confidence and keep your focus on the team.
- After the game, give them space and time. Leave them alone.
• Be a confidence builder by maintaining a consistent perspective and not saying or doing anything that will have them feel like their self-worth is tied to playing time or outcome of a game.
Three focus times

• Before the first game

• During the competition

• After competition
Before the First Game
Before the First Game

• Parents ask yourself
  – Do you want them to play? If so, why?
  – What will be a successful season for you as a parent?
  – What are your goals for them?
  – What do you hope they gain from the experience?
  – What do you think their role will be on this team?
Before the first Game

• **Ask your son/daughter**
  - Why are you playing?
  - What is a successful season?
  - What goals do you have?
  - What do you think your role will be on the team?
After answering questions....

• Compare them to yours
  – If both sets of answers are the same, great....
  – If yours are different from theirs, they need you to drop yours and accept theirs. NO QUESTIONS!!
“Releasing” your child to the game

• Stay close to the situation and get to know the coach....
  – Once you are not concerned for their personal safety, one of the best gifts you can give your athlete is to release them to this activity.
  – During the season you must share your child with the coach and the team.
Feeling the need to talk with the coach....

- Appropriate concerns to discuss:
  - Mental and physical treatment of your child
  - Ways to help your child improve
  - Concerns about your child’s behavior
Feeling the need to talk with the coach....

• Inappropriate areas of concern to discuss:
  – Playing time
  – Team strategy or play calling
  – Other team members
Some Red Flags that you have not released...

- Living your own personal athletic dream through your child
- You tend to share the credit when they have done well or been victorious
- Trying to solve their problems
- You are trying to continue to coach them when they probably know more than you do.
More Red Flags...

- You should realize you are taking it to seriously....when:
  - You are nervous before your child’s game.
  - You have a difficult time bouncing back after a defeat.
  - You make mental notes during a game so you can give them advice at the conclusion of the game.
  - You become verbally critical of an official
More Red Flags...

• Athletes avoid us after games or embarrassed about our involvement

• ALL THESE SIGNALS TELL US THAT THE EXPERIENCE IS STILL SHARED AND THEY NEED MORE SPACE.
During the game

- Model appropriate behavior
- Focus on the team and team goals
- Have one instructional voice offering advice. The coaches.
Four roles during a game

• Spectator
• Competitor
• Official
• Coach

• Would be wise to choose only one of these to try to fulfill.
Having trouble dealing with officials?

• They are there to be in charge of the game, make subjective judgments, enforce the rules and control play.

• As a parent, you do not have the right to interact with a game official.
Judgment occurs in every sport...

- Each referee’s whistle and every coach’s substitution can be questioned by anyone in attendance and it makes it more difficult for an adult with emotional ties to remain poised and encouraging.
Judgment occurs in every sport...

- Almost all parents believe their child should play more, or have a bigger role on the team. It is difficult for parents to be objective.
- Coaches can be.
Soloist or Spotlight elements of some sports

- Sports where spectators are close to the action:
  - There is subjective judgment and your athlete is in a spotlight that creates some very difficult times for the parents.
  - As the adult you need to learn to watch whatever sport your athlete has chosen to play and provide what they need most.
Main things that athlete say adults can do...

• To help during competition.
  – If you are able to do these helpful things, players love to have you present at their games.
  – If you cannot meet the expressed needs of modeling poise and confidence, many have said they would rather have you stay home.
After the competition

• Best Memory vs. Worst Memory
  – Athletes enjoy the games (practice is over and we get to play)
  – After the game (car ride home with dad)
    • “Just be my Dad”
After the competition

• Give athletes time and space.
• Athletes rely on relationships to succeed in team sports.
  – Have confident, meaningful relationships with teammates and coaches.
After the competition

- Athletes do not need adults to question their actions, actions of other players, coach’s strategy, or playing time.

  - Question’s like:
    - Why does coach play a zone?
    - Why don’t you throw deep on first down instead of running?
After the competition

• Can you be a source of confidence and help build relationships on the team under these conditions:
  • When your athlete played well, but the team lost?
  • When they played poorly?
  • When the athlete played very little or did not play at all?
After the competition

• Summary
  – Give them time and space they need to recover. The more competitive the athlete and the more competitive the sport, the more time and space they need.
  – Good athletes learn better when they seek their own answers.
After the competition

• **Summary**
  
  – Confronting a behavior that would not be acceptable in your home...
  
  • Discuss it as a parent to a child, not a parent to an athlete.
After the competition

• One comment that can always be sincerely said and received is,

“\text{I LOVE WATCHING YOU PLAY}”!
Three clearly needed defined roles are:

- **Players Role**
- **Coaches Role**
- **Parents Role**
PLAYERS ROLE
PLAYERS ROLE

• Play the game for fun
• Be humble when you win and gracious when you lose
• Respect and abide by the rules of the game
• Put the team ahead of yourself in every situation
• Accept decisions made by those in authority
• Demonstrate respect to your opponents, coaches and teammates
• Be accountable for your own actions
• Develop a teachable spirit that allows you to take correction as a compliment
• Accept and embrace the discipline involved in athletics because it benefits the team
• Develop the feelings of pride, based upon “shared joy” of the team and not have pride be shown in arrogance or a sense of entitlement.
• Be an athlete of character
COACHES ROLE
COACHES ROLE

• Coach for the love of the game and the love of the athlete
• Athletes above winning
• Accept and abide by the judgment of the officials and rules of the game as “mutual agreements” required to play within the spirit of the game
• Reward effort and behavior and not outcome
COACHES ROLE CONT.

• Give dignity to mistakes made with full speed and attention
• Lead with character and by example
• Put needs of the team ahead of any individual
• Constantly work to improve your knowledge and ability to teach the game and the athletes
COACHES ROLE CONT....

• Be willing to confront incorrect behavior or less than all out effort
• Encourage multiple sport participation
• Keep the game simple and fun
• Be willing to work with parents for the benefit of the individual athlete
• Develop a positive-demanding coaching style
PARENTS ROLE

- Attend as many games as possible
- Be a model not a critic----model appropriate behavior, poise and confidence
- Attend preseason team meetings
- Do everything possible to make the athletic experience positive for your child and others
- View the game with team goals in mind
• Attempt to relieve competitive pressure, not increase it
• Encourage multiple sport participation
• Release them to the coach and the team
• Look upon opponents as friends in the same experience
• Accept the judgment of the officials and coaches—remain in control
PARENTS ROLE CONT....

- Accept the results of each game—do not make excuses
- Demonstrate winning and losing with dignity
- Dignify mistakes made by athletes who are giving their best effort and concentration
- Be an encourager—encourage athletes to keep perspective in both victory and defeat
PARENTS ROLE CONT....

- Be a good listener
- Accept the goals, roles and achievements of your child