

Following are guidelines for how sports parents/caregivers can contribute to a Coach-Parent/Caregiver Partnership that benefits youth athletes.

- **Recognize the Coaches' Commitment.** Your athlete's coaches have made a commitment that involves many hours of preparation beyond the time spent at practices and games. Quite likely in youth sports they are volunteers. Respect their commitment and imagine yourself in their place before approaching them to discuss any issues you may observe.
- **Make Early, Positive Contact with the Coach.** As soon as you know who will coach your athlete, contact those coaches to introduce yourself and offer any assistance you may provide. Establishing a positive relationship with the coaches will help you proactively shape a positive experience for your athlete and will lay the foundation for respectful, productive conversations with coaches should a conflict arise later.
- **Provide Support To The Coach.** Too often, coaches hear only from parents/caregivers who have complaints. Providing positive support with specific, truthful praise reinforces them to continue doing the things you see as benefiting your athletes.
- **Don't Put the Player in the Middle.** You wouldn't complain to your athlete about how poorly their math teacher explains fractions. Don't share your disapproval of a coach with your athlete. Doing so may force the athlete to take sides, and not necessarily your side! If your athlete has an issue with the coach and can maturely articulate it, encourage your athlete to approach the coach and at the very least learn some life lessons in self-advocacy with an authority figure. Otherwise, if you disapprove of how the coach handles a situation, seek a private meeting to discuss the matter.
- **Let Coaches Coach.** It can confuse players to hear someone other than the coach yelling out instructions. Also, your instructions may counter the coaches' strategy and tactics, undermining team performance.
- **Keep Conversations with your Athlete Positive.** Competitive sports can be stressful to players. The last thing they need is your critiquing their performance...on top of what the coach may deliver and what they already are telling themselves. Let your athlete(s) know you love and support them regardless of their performance.
- **Contribute to a Positive Environment.** Let all players know when you see them doing something well. Support the team as a positive spectator, using your voice to encourage those who coach, watch, play, and referee the game.

