

# **Zero Offseason**

Divorce, Youth Sports  
& Tips for the  
Insanely Busy  
Sports Mom

Brian Brunkow, Esq.

## **Fun Legal Stuff**

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Dear Sport Mom,

Thanks for taking time to read my short book on sports parenting. This is a collection of thoughts from my experiences as a youth football coach, divorce attorney, and freelance writer on NCAA athletic scholarship recruiting. The book is written for divorced moms interested in learning how best to support her child's youth sports experience.

Please know that it's not a treatise with footnotes, diagrams, brightly-hued pie charts, and in-depth analysis of decade-long conflicting and contradictory studies on changing sports parenting philosophies. That kind of scholarly work is above my pay grade. Instead, each topic is designed as a simple springboard to help busy sports moms in developing youth athletes...maybe think of each topic as a slightly longer than usual daily fortune cookie - how useful that fortune cookie is really depends on the actions taken (bang the gong).

The one thing I've learned - developing the ability to cancel out the noise and nonsense and to get focused on the important stuff is a life skill that transfers across all areas - family relationships, personal development, career advancement, and overall confidence. When it is time to hang up the cleats, the youth athlete can take this skill through life.

One big theme I hope divorced moms, new to youth sports, take away is the importance of working with

youth athletes on *Setting Process-Oriented Goals; Getting "Present," and Controlling the "Controllables"*.

Thx for reading!

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

That would be me. I graduated with honors from Seattle University School of Law and I'm a San Diego-based CA and WA attorney focused on family law involving sports-parents & student-athletes and NCAA recruiting guidance.

A sometimes proud resident of "Southern La Jolla", AKA Pacific Beach, I made the move to *The Big Fish Taco* after 93 seemingly consecutive days of rain in *The Emerald City*. Whilst no fan of the humble brag, I'd argue that I have the best work commute of any west coast lawyer based on my leisurely ride up the PB boardwalk every morning on my trusty beach cruiser.

When off the clock, I coach in the highly lucrative field of youth football and scribble about sports-parenting, wide receiver development, and NCAA recruiting at [www.ZeroOffseason.com](http://www.ZeroOffseason.com)

## **My Favorite Day of Coaching – Perspective**

It's not about the X's & O's. When coaching the little guys in flag football (6-8 year olds) I always ask the players if they have questions before leaving the huddle – snap count, who to block, play direction, etc. So one time on a key drive a player asked the following important question, **“How do people know what time it is when flying in an airplane?!!!”**

Whether eight or 18, these are kids. Kids having fun, and playing a game. I now try to keep that perspective in mind whenever I start to take the role of coaching football too seriously.

Winless or undefeated? It doesn't matter. Did the kids learn life skills and show some improvement? That's all that matters.

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## RESOURCES

***"Sports-Dad Sues High School Track Coach for \$40M."***

True story! A track dad sued his son's coach and school when the student-athlete was removed from the team for unexcused absences. Track dad claimed this harmed his son's chances at a college scholarship. But what college coach wants to deal with that family for next four years?

...yaaaa, don't be that guy.

Let's begin!



# **EFFECTIVE** **SPORTS** **PARENTING**

## **Part I:**

Support, Don't Coach

Aligning Goals & Ego

Divorce & Sports Parenting

Concussion Management

Comparisons

Post & Pre-Game Routines

The "Blacklist"

# 1

## **SUPPORT, DON'T COACH**

Players play, parents support, and coaches coach. Simple rules; complex roles.

Sports parents won't agree with every decision the coach makes. You may not like the coach, the style of play or personnel decisions. But if you trust the coach with your kid's physical and mental welfare then please allow the coach to coach - they earned the title "coach" through many hours of unpaid time on the field away from family, paying and traveling for coaching education safety clinics and studying game film on the weekends.

While parents focus on their child, the coach focuses on the big picture which includes your child and another 20 + kids depending on the sport and season. That's a lot of responsibility, decisions to make, and competing interests to balance among the parents. And for every team parent that wants their child to focus on a single position all season there is another parent that wants their child to play as many positions as possible during the season. Bottom line is that it is the coaching staff's role to decide who plays where and when.

If you want to work with your child on technique outside of practice, definitely talk to the coach beforehand and find out what to focus on so you are in step with the coach's expectations. Teaching your child a skill set that contradicts what the coaches expect just creates confusion, frustration and divided loyalty – don't put a twelve year old in the position of deciding whether to disappoint mom/dad or the coach with performing what has been taught.

As a football coach, I've watched inexperienced sports parents with good intentions working with their sons before practice teaching "wrong" technique. Talk to the coach.

Keep in mind that the best way to create a positive experience for your child is to be the emotional backstop before and after rough practices and games. Especially in a difficult divorce situation where the child is "ping-ponging" between households and conflicting expectations. Kids need consistent expectations so they can feel confident in what they are trying to learn. Be the emotional backstop and allow the coach to coach. Stay focused on providing unconditional support for the ups and downs of youth sports.

Every competent coach sets "office hours" whether that is in person, by phone, email, or video conference. Remember that every coach is probably juggling a full-time job, family responsibilities, and

coaching duties with time commitments that extend well beyond the playing field. Respect the coach's time. Sit down with the coach before the season, every season, and find out how you can play a role in supporting the team.

That being said, there's some basic expectations that every sports-mom should have of her child's coach:

**Player Safety:** every coach should be certified in concussion management and there must be a "return to play" system for when a player suffers an apparent head injury. Ask questions and get specific. Full-contact practices (football) should be limited in amount and duration. Players should be matched up against similar players of size and ability during practice drills.

**Verbal/Physical Abuse:** There is zero tolerance for youth sports coaches with outsized, inflated egos. Any sign of verbal or physical abuse must be stopped and reported up immediately. The days of grabbing kids' face masks to get a point across are over.

**Positive Experience:** The good coaches know to praise publicly and to fix problems privately. Does the coach take five minutes at the end of each practice to teach lessons? Sports-parents should expect that some amount of time on the practice field is spent teaching life skills. It doesn't really matter in the long run if the team goes winless or undefeated. What life skills are being learned? Kids should be learning

teamwork, leadership, dealing with competition and pressure, discipline, struggling through stages of skill development. Youth sports is simply the vehicle for teaching the above.

**Communication with Parents:** It is the responsibility of the head coach to communicate the “how” and “when” to address any issues. Respect the coaches’ office hours. Also understand that most head coaches expect parents to discuss issues like playing time, positions, and other personnel decisions directly with the head coach. It is bad, bad form for sports-parents to blast away at volunteer assistant coaches regarding playing time.

Avoid the “blacklist” (discussed below) and talk to the head coach and not assistants with any gripes. And remember to multiple the amount of time you complain to the head coach x the number of other sports-parents of the team. Respect the coach’s time.

And figure out the dynamics with the ex-spouse and communications with the coach. Kids sense conflict no matter how much divorced parents try to shield the children from disagreements on parenting. Are you on the same page with the ex concerning youth sports expectations? Is the coach hearing the same expectations from both parents or is the coach left in a state of confusion about your situation. The practice field can be a safe space for your child. Don’t make it a parental battleground – divorced parents owe it to

their child to do whatever it takes to create a positive experience for the youth athlete.

Competent coaches also appreciate hearing from sports-parents before the season. Sports-moms who want the best for the team and understand the parent-athlete-coach roles are a huge asset to team development. Always ask what you can do to help create a positive season for the kids. This goes a long way with coaches. And the great thing is that this mindset has nothing to do with becoming an expert in whatever sport your child plays. It's about creating a positive support system so the kids can focus on playing a game once they hit the field.

Also, make early contact with the head coach if there are special education needs or difficult family dynamics to keep in mind. Again, remember that the coach is tracking 20 + kids and their parents and step-parents every season. That's a lot of personalities, egos and expectations. Do your part, get on the same page with the ex and make it easier on the coach to know how to help your child reach his or her potential.

And find out the following from the head coach:

**Coach office hours and parenting plans** – what are the offseason and seasonal office hours and what is the best way to communicate with the coach (phone, email, text, video conference, in person). Does the coach know how to communicate with you

and the ex? Are there court-ordered limitations on contact? Make sure both you and the ex know when and how to contact the head coach. Build this into the parenting plan if necessary if you and the ex sadly can't sit in the same room together. Set boundaries and respect them.

**Coaching Philosophy & Experience** – *why* did he or she get into coaching, *what* does he or she expect to teach and *how* does he or she plan to teach it. Both you and ex should have a clear understanding of the coaching philosophy to avoid conflict and misunderstandings later on.

**Mental Skills Improvement** – mental toughness and “grit” is the most important life skill taught in youth sports. The kids should be learning how to deal with adversity and struggling through the volatility that comes along with any skill development. Remember learning how to drive a stick shift? Or a new computer program? Or have you ever taken a frustrating golf lesson where the progress learned yesterday suddenly disappears overnight? Kids need to learn to “stick with it.”

What is the coach's approach to teaching mental toughness. If a coach has a history of kids quitting than that is a problem. It's sad to say, but there are a few coaches who will intentionally drive out weaker-skilled kids rather than “coach them up.” These are just lousy, selfish coaches more interested in a win-

loss record instead of teaching. Winless or undefeated. It doesn't matter. What life skill is being taught and is it being taught the correct way?

The kids should be pushed and challenged but not to the point of quitting. You and the ex should be on the same page with this expectation of the head coach and his or her coaching staff.

**Best Parental Practices (Team)** – parents of youth athletes have a choice. They can be an asset or detriment to team chemistry and development. Be a “team” parent and find out how you can best support the team and coaches. This goes a long way on the coaching tree.

Like any other profession, the coaches talk. Make no mistake on this point. Coaches (from rookie up to high school varsity) know and talk to each other about who the team-oriented parents are and who the problem parents are from previous seasons. Once you get tagged as a problem parent that can be a hard label to shake. Take the long view and work hard to be a parent the coaches look forward to working with every season.

However, when you do have a legitimate problem with a coach, the problem should be addressed. Don't let problems slide to avoid the “blacklist.” That's not the point here. Just address the problem in the correct way. This means during office hours or at the very least a sidebar with the head coach away from the



other assistant coaches, the players and parents. Do not criticize the head coach in front of the players or other parents. This creates confusion, divided loyalty and a toxic environment.

And What About Game Day Instructions from the Bleachers? Just Don't! Players play, parents support, and coaches coach.

# Support, Don't Coach Summary

- 1. Communication:** get on the same page with the ex concerning communications with the coach, expectations with your youth athlete, and the parenting plan and child support expenses for youth sports.
- 2. Sports Parenting Role:** effective sports parenting is about providing unconditional support to your child. There is no need to become an expert in whatever sport your child plays. Let the coach do the coaching. There will be many bad days of practice or mistakes in the game and your child will look to you for support. Remember that "players play, coaches coach and parents support."
- 3. Don't "Wing it":** Becoming an effective sports parent requires work. It is a skill. Develop a game plan for how to build pre-game confidence and post-game coping and learning skills in your youth athlete.

## 2

# ALIGNING GOALS & EGO

I've seen a few patterns with divorced sports parents from my experiences coaching youth football: overbearing; overcompensating; entirely absent; passive-aggressive or obstructionist. Youth sports becomes a battle ground to test, bully and push the ex's hot buttons. And who takes the brunt? The youth athlete unfairly takes the brunt, of course.

Not every kid plays sports for the same reason. And not every ex spouse wants their child to play sports for the same reason. Maybe mom expects her son to play in the NFL while dad wants his son to have a constructive place to spend time after school. And there the conflict starts...

For some kids sports are a passion. For other kids, it's simply a chance to hang out with friends after school. Ask questions. Find out why your child wants to play and then align your goals with the ex to support the child's goals.

It doesn't really matter if you were an all-conference "*baller*" back in the day because this is the child's season and experience. Too many parents try to relive

the glory days through their kid's performance or equate parenting skills and "bleacher status" with their child's athletic skills. This problem is especially present with divorced parents – the need to overcompensate to "make up" for problems at home or failures with the ex. Now instead of providing a positive environment for the child it becomes a competition and power struggle between the divorced couple. Goals are no longer aligned and ego controls decisions. It is no longer about what is in the best interests of the youth athlete.

Also, aligning parental goals with the student-athlete is especially important for former gifted college athletes who may not know just how difficult it is for the "rest of us" to develop athletic talent.

## **Aligning Goals and Ego Summary:**

- 1. Ask Questions:** ask your child why he or she wants to play sports. Align your goals to their goals (not the other way around.)
- 2. Check the Ego:** do whatever it takes to create a positive, aligned set of expectations with the ex for supporting the youth athlete. Do you or the ex fit one of the common profiles – overbearing; overcompensating; absent; passive-aggressive; or obstructionist? Check the ego. Do what is in the best interests of the youth athlete.
- 3. Who's Experience?:** keep in mind that this is your son or daughter's youth sports journey. Don't use their experience as a way to relive past glories or make up for lost time.

# 3

## **DIVORCE & SPORTS PARENTING**

ALERT....Easier Said Than Done Section!!!)

Divorced parents simply must get on the same page with sports scheduling, expenses, and expectations.

There is a reason why the courts apply a "best interests" standard when determining and allocating parental responsibilities - the goal is to achieve what is in the best interests of the child, not the parents. This includes the child's emotional growth, health, safety, and physical care.

As a football coach, I see the same problems every season with parents not communicating with each other - the player shows up at football practice embarrassed because he is missing his helmet between custodial transfers, or a parent routinely drops the player off late to practice, or a parent removes the player from the team three games into a season to "show" their ex.

Kids learn great life lessons from team sports. So parents should suck it up and work to support the

athletic schedule regardless of how toxic the post-marriage relationship is between the “adults” (providing it is non-abusive).

First, map out the yearly athletic schedule, including practices, games, and summer clinics, and then create a flexible parenting plan and child support arrangement that supports those commitments (not the other way around). And can you and the ex create a plan that allows you to co-exist in the bleachers for games? Or, will the two of you become a spectacle and distraction? Figure it out. This should not be the child’s problem or concern.

As a divorce lawyer, I’ve seen how difficult it is for a parent to take the “high-road” when the ex is playing games and uncooperative. But please remember the default position of doing what is in the “best interests” of the youth athlete.

And I wish I could say that being the “bigger person” miraculously changes an ex’s bad behavior. Chances are it won’t. What it will do, however, is create a more positive experience for a child stuck between two warring parents.

One anecdote I share with parents every season is Alec Baldwin vs. Kim Basinger. After a nine year marriage, Baldwin and Basinger waged war with an eight year custody battle, involving \$3M in court costs and legal fees, and 90 + court proceedings. Who benefited from that?

# **Divorce & Sports Parenting Summary:**

**1. First Things First:** develop a parenting plan that supports the yearly sports schedule, including practices, games, and summer camps. Don't wedge a youth sports plan into what works best for you and the ex. Understand that sports schedules will cut into your shared parenting time.

**2. Child Support:** youth sports is considered an "extracurricular" activity by most state courts (check with your jurisdiction). What this means is that in many states you cannot force the ex to pay for certain sports activities in a child support plan. Develop a game plan for approaching an uncooperative ex about sharing youth sports expenses. Explain the benefits that youth sports can provide for your child's development.

Consider low-conflict, non-litigation solutions like mediation or collaborative law to create a shared-payment plan for youth sports expenses.

**3. Best Interests Standard:** when in doubt, fall back to the default position of doing what is in the best interests of the child.



# 4

## **CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT**

3.9 million — that's the estimated number of sports and recreational-related concussions every year in the United States, according to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC"). The problem, though, is that you can't see a concussion.

Briefly, a concussion is an injury that changes how the cells in the brain normally function and is caused by a blow to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. The CDC reports that football and hockey have the highest number of concussions, followed by soccer, wrestling, basketball, field hockey, baseball, softball and volleyball. It's estimated that U.S. high school athletes sustain 300,000 concussion per year; 67,000 from interscholastic football. The risk of concussions is highest in the 15-to 19-year-old age group among all age groups nationally.

And a concussion, unlike the infamous Lawrence Taylor-delivered compound fracture to Joe Theismann on Monday Night Football, is difficult to diagnose.

Concussion symptoms may appear immediately after impact or may not be noticed for days or weeks after the injury.

Fortunately, sports leagues, youth coaches, and parents are becoming better educated and are paying increased attention to concussions in the competitive youth sports arena. As a football coach myself, it seems the kids get bigger and stronger every season and the competition more intense with year-round training and multiple summer camp expectations.

In this section (just slightly longer than the other tips due to its importance) we'll review concussion management and "Return to Play" legislation, requirements and purpose.

### **Washington (no...the *other* Washington) Leads the Way**

In May 2009, former Washington state Gov. Christine Gregoire signed House Bill 1824 (HB 1824), an act requiring the adoption of policies for the management of concussions and head injuries in youth sports. HB 1824 amended RCW § 4.24.660 and added an important section to chapter RCW 28A.600.

HB 1824, known as the "Zackery Lystedt Law," was first-in-the-nation legislation and quickly became the framework for 50 states plus the District of Columbia in setting guidelines for student-athletes' "return to play" clearance after suffering head injuries.

The architect for HB 1824 was Seattle-area attorney Richard H. Adler of Adler Giersch, P.S. He recruited Rep. Jay Rodne, R-North Bend, to sponsor the bill on behalf of Zackery Lystedt and his parents, Adler's clients. Lystedt, then an eighth-grader playing youth football suffered a horrible and preventable brain injury in 2006.

Adler organized a broad and influential coalition of healthcare, sports and business community partners, including The CDC, Seattle Seahawks, Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (the rule-making body for high school athletics), Washington State Athletic Trainers Association, Washington Youth Soccer Association, University of Washington, Seattle Children's Hospital and many others. The bill passed unanimously in both the Washington House and Senate.

Briefly, Lystedt suffered a concussion near the end of the first half of a game. He was taken out of the game, rested for a couple of plays and the halftime break, and then returned to the game. Lystedt collapsed at the end of the game, went into a coma for the next month, was unable to speak for nine months and required a feeding tube for 20 months following his injury.

### **RCW § 28A.600.190(3)-(4)**

Concussions are unavoidable in certain sports, so Lystedt's case quickly became a national example of

the need for more stringent standards when allowing young athletes back on the field after suffering apparent head injuries. It's the premature return to play and potential for traumatic brain injury from another concussion or blow to the head that the Zackery Lystedt Law addresses and is designed to prevent.

The CDC reminds parents and coaches that “a repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first — usually within a short period of time (hours, days or weeks) — can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in brain swelling, permanent brain damage, and even death.”

A key part of the Zackery Lystedt Law is found at RCW § 28A.600.190, which states:

(3) A youth athlete who is *suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury* in a practice or game *shall be removed* from competition at that time.

(4) A youth athlete who has been removed from play *may not return to play* until the athlete is *evaluated by a licensed health care provider* trained in the evaluation and management of concussion and received *written clearance to play* from that health care provider ....

## **Parents, Athletes & Coaches: Concussion Symptoms**

The Zackery Lystedt Law provides a framework for dealing with head injuries in youth sports, but concussions are very unpredictable. The key is education and on-field vigilance in spotting signs and symptoms of concussions after an athlete suffers a bump or blow to the head in competition (practice or game).

Though we can't eliminate the initial concussion, we can take steps to prevent a second concussion during the critical healing period; that is the "return to play" focus for athletes, parents, coaches and healthcare providers.

According to the CDC, parents, coaches and staff should look for the follow symptoms after a forceful blow to a student-athlete's head or body that results in rapid movement of the head:

- Athlete appears dazed or stunned

- Confusion about assignments or position

- Moves clumsily

- Loss of consciousness (even briefly)

- Behavioral changes

- Slurred speech

Can't recall events prior to or after the fall or hit.

And student-athletes might self-report the following symptoms:

Headache or "pressure" in the head

Nausea or vomiting

Balance or dizziness problems

Double or blurry vision

Sensitivity to light or sound

Feeling sluggish

Concentration or memory problems.

## **Unintended Consequences of Return-to-Play Rules**

It was probably inevitable that gamesmanship allegations would arise under the new and evolving state-by-state "return to play" standards.

In Massachusetts, an early adopter of "Return to Play" legislation, the New Mission High School's girls' basketball team was playing at Shawsheen Technical High School. New Mission was leading Shawsheen in the fourth quarter of a playoff game when a key New Mission player drove the basket and got poked in the eye.

The home team (Shawsheen) provided the athletic trainer for both teams at this game. The trainer determined that the New Mission player suffered a concussion as a result of getting poked in the eye and sidelined her for the remainder of the game. Shawsheen then rallied from an eight-point deficit to win the game and advance in the playoffs. The player in question was taken to a hospital after the game where it was confirmed she did not have a concussion, but merely a bruised cornea.

Whether the safety measures taken in the unusual New Mission case were appropriate or not, the need to be cautious with student-athletes and head injuries should remain the top priority for parents and coaches. Concussion symptoms are just not as obvious as other sports-related injuries and the possible long-term adverse consequences are very high.

Mistakes will be made. We'll be overly cautious at times and remove kids from play when they can be out on the field. But the intent (of 'return to play' legislation) is to save kids' lives, and to prevent preventable brain injuries. The job of any league, coach, administrator, athletic director, parent or licensed healthcare professional is to make sure that a child's safety is the number one priority.

An important program supported by the National Football League is USA Football. USA Football is the

official youth football development partner of the NFL and the governing body for youth football. This program allows parents, coaches and players to educate themselves on safety, rules and proper techniques through online video instruction, articles, interviews and clinics. The annual membership fee is reasonable and this is a terrific resource for sports parents, especially new sports parents to consider joining.

### **Postscript on Zackery Lystedt**

With an Individual Education Plan and accommodations made in the classroom setting, along with his parents unending commitment to provide support and encouragement, Lystedt was able to enroll in a community college class.

Lastly, chances are that your state's high school interscholastic website provides extensive and free information on concussion management and safety. Make use of it!



## **Concussion Management Summary:**

- 1. Training:** Make sure your child's coaches are certified in concussion management – identifying symptoms and "return to play" policies.
- 2. Education:** Sports moms are responsible for learning about concussion management to protect their youth athlete. Make use of the many free and low-cost resources listed below under "Resources."
- 3. Align Goals:** Divorced parents need to get on the same page with what sports to allow their child to play. Especially when it comes to contact sports like football. There are a lot of team sports to choose from. Listen to your ex's concerns about what sports they are comfortable allowing the child to play. And listen to your child – don't "force" him (or her) to play a contact sport like youth football. It is not worth it. Football is not a place to "toughen up."

# 5

## COMPARISONS

When you open a carton of eggs you can reasonably expect the enclosed twelve-man roster to perform about the same as the last carton of eggs. Not so much with youth sports.

As a football coach, I'm surprised every season by the changes in players from one year to the next. Kids grow, mature and develop skills differently and a "support player" one season becomes the "superstar" the next. The opposite holds true as well. And back and forth it goes from kid to kid, sport to sport and season to season.

So compare a kid's athletic ability to where they were last year, last month, or last week. But avoid comparisons to other teammates and players in the league. Be patient. Allow the student-athlete to improve and develop at his or her own pace.

Avoiding comparison isn't about coddling or "participation awards" but channeling a kid's focus to improving and competing against themselves.

Some examples of *marginally* successful late bloomers:

**Jerry Rice:** Rice didn't go to USC, Notre Dame or University of Texas. No. The greatest wide receiver in history attended... Mississippi Valley State University!

**Aaron Rogers:** Rogers, the Green Bay Packers QB and Super Bowl winner started his college career at Butte Community College because he didn't get a *single* Division I athletic scholarship offer coming out of high school!

**Tom Brady:** The multi-super bowl champ and future hall of famer was a 6<sup>th</sup> round draft. A couple QB's selected ahead of Tom Brady - Giovanni Carmazzi, Hofstra - Drafted by the San Francisco 49ers in Round 3, Pick 65; and Spergon Wynn, SW Texas State - Drafted by the Cleveland Browns in Round 6, Pick 183.

**Michael Jordan:** And everyone knows the story of Jordan by now. The fiercest, most competitive and gifted athletic talent ever was cut from his high school varsity basketball team as a sophomore. But he stayed with it. Imagine our loss had Jordan's parents said, "Meh, maybe basketball is not for you, young Michael. Let's try baseball."

Bottom line – avoid comparisons that may discourage a student-athlete to stick with a sport they love to play.

## Comparisons Summary:

- 1. Patience:** allow your youth athlete to develop at his or her own pace. If they love to play, allow some breathing room and time to achieve their potential. Encourage the athlete to stick with it rather than badgering them about what they can and cannot do.
- 2. Self Charting:** only compare your youth athlete against where he or she was last game or last season. Some kids are just supremely gifted and it is unfair to compare the typical athlete against those prodigies. Show your athlete tangible proof of improvement.

Again it is not about coddling, it is about positive reinforcement and keeping kids in youth sports so they can receive all of the life lessons that are taught in team sports. Make sure you and the ex are in lock-step with where you see the youth athlete's current stage and future expectations for improvement.

- 3. Proof of Concept:** there is no better example of what is possible than Michael Jordan. Cut from a high school basketball team, he stayed with it to become the greatest athlete in history. Jordan was not the "chosen one" from the time he was five years old. Far from it. Show your youth athlete what is possible with hard work, discipline, and grit.

# 6

## PRE AND POST GAME ROUTINES

**Pre-Game:** An effective pre-game routine is to discuss *specific* “worst case scenarios” with your student-athlete and talk about how they will respond. They have a choice. Bad stuff will happen regardless of preparation and effort. Balls will be fumbled, passes will be dropped, tackles will be missed. Working through possible worst case scenarios beforehand and accepting that mistakes will happen helps reduce game-day pressure and anxiety.

For example, as a wide receiver one of the most difficult catches to make is the one thrown...slow...and perfectly...while wide open in the end zone with the crowd watching. That’s just too much time to get up in your head and think “what if this, what if that...” So work through those kinds of situations.

So before the season or next game spend time helping shape the student athlete’s ability to shake off mistakes so they can focus on the next play. The only thing they can control is the next play, not the

last play or what happens two plays from now. The next play is where their focus should be. And this focus is a learned skill.

**Post-Game:** Create space between a bad performance and post-game life lessons. Let the sting wear off before offering constructive ideas for improvement.

Too many times I see parents replaying their son's mistakes after a game before they even get to the car. Give it 24 hours before having that conversation – the player will be less defensive and more receptive. Ask open-ended questions in areas the player has control over and can improve upon like effort, attitude, intensity, concentration, and being a good teammate.

You'll notice that these conversations have nothing to do with a sports-parent's expertise on blocking and tackling – remember that coaches coach and parents support. Be the emotional backstop that creates confidence in the student-athlete to overcome adversity. Adversity will show up again and again in sports and later on in careers and personal lives. Shape the ability to say, "Hey, we knew this bad outcome was a possibility. We talked about it pre-game. Well, it happened. So what. We're moving forward."

Having these pre and post routines (season, tryout, game) is an effective way for sports-parents to

support student-athletes. ***Get present; focus on process-oriented goals, and control the controllables.***

# Pre and Post Game Routines

## Summary:

- 1. Pre-Game Preparation:** discuss the bad things that can happen regardless of effort. Develop coping skills and reduce game day pressure by explaining that mistakes are not the end of the world.
- 2. Post Game Review:** leave some breathing room before offering up ideas for improvement to your youth athlete. Ask questions about improving areas the athlete can control – effort, focus, teamwork, etc. Asking anyone to improve in areas they cannot control just leaves them in a state of learned helplessness.
- 3. Parents' Support:** the best pre and post game role for sports parents is to provide support to the athlete. Be the safe haven for the youth athlete away from the field. Let the coach do the coaching while you keep the athlete motivated to stick with it and improve on last game's performance. (think of it this way – the last thing a working mom wants after a bad day at work is someone piling on at home!)



# 7

## THE "BLACKLIST"

Coaches talk. Believe me. Coaches communicate with each other and keep the toxic parents on radar. The coaching fraternity/sorority runs from the introductory level up to high school varsity. And then from varsity coaches to college recruiters. Coaches are like Santa Claus – they check their list, they check it twice, the coaches know which parents are naughty and nice.

And here is a scary, sobering statistic - only 3% of high school athletes earn an athletic scholarship - so if your child is in the rare position of being recruited, you'll want to stay off the "black list."

Recently, a New Jersey sports dad sued his son's high school track coach and school for \$40M after his son was cut from the team for excessive unexcused absences. What college coach wants to deal with **that** family for the next four years?

It's pretty simple - if a high school coach has five kids from his or her team getting recruited, and a certain parent did nothing but create conflict, that coach, who may like the player, won't see the problem parent as a priority - don't let parental bad behavior or ego cost a student-athlete an athletic scholarship opportunity.

This is another example of why it is so important for divorced couples to be on the same page with how they deal with the coach.

Coaches are busy and if you or the ex creates headaches for the coach or other parents you will go to the bottom of the priority list.

## **The Black List Summary:**

- 1. Stay of the Black List:** don't be a jackass.
- 2. Divided Loyalty:** parents who create conflict with coaches end up dividing loyalty between the coach and the athlete and the parent and the coach. Nothing good can come from that.
- 3. Athletic Scholarship Stats:** when only 3% of high school athletes earn a scholarship, divorced parents can't afford to damage the relationship with the coach. College recruiters will spend a lot of time with the high school coach to find out about the athlete and the family situation.

All things being equal if a college recruiter is selecting between two equally talented kids, and the family of one of the players is a royal pain in the ass, then, well, guess who is NOT earning a scholarship to that school. The player did his or her part, the parents not so much.

# **DEVELOPING** **MENTAL** **TOUGHNESS**

## **Part II:**

Hit the "Delete" Button

Get Present – The "Controllables"

Process-Oriented Goals

Visualization

Bench Player to Starter

"Grit" vs. Lazy Talent

The Seven Mental Dwarfs

# 8

## HIT THE DELETE BUTTON

The “delete” button is an athlete’s best friend. The delete button allows the athlete to stay confident and focused on what they can control.

And to stay confident under pressure in a game situation, it is critical to help your athlete develop a “short term memory.” That last play? Done. It no longer matters – maybe the quarterback got sacked for a five yard loss. Or maybe the team made a key third down conversion. Done. It no longer matters. Delete it, move on. Press the delete button because the last play doesn’t matter anymore.

An athlete can’t control the last play and an athlete can’t control the play two downs from now. The only play that matters is the very next play. That is the only action within the team and athlete’s control. That is where the focus should be. And this approach requires intentional, purposeful practice to become disciplined.

Whatever just happened, positive or negative, work with your athlete to develop this routine:

Learn one lesson from the last play (or game),  
Press the delete button, and  
Now focus 100% on the next play (or game)

Sometimes it helps to combine visual, sound and physical cues to reinforce this technique – think of the delete button as a big, shiny red button (maybe like the Staples “easy” button). When the play is over the athlete focuses on the visual of that big, shiny red delete button, and presses down hard while saying “delete.”

Remind your athlete that this rule applies to every athlete. No matter how talented or experienced a player is, he or she has no control over anything that just happened or what may or may not happen two plays later. It is only the next play that matters because that is the only thing the player, any player can control. Your student athlete has the same amount of control over the last play that just happened as Michael Jordan. Hit “delete.”

## **Hit the Delete Button Summary:**

- 1. Short Term Memory:** the only play that matters is the next play. Whatever just happened is done. Whatever might happen in the second half of the game is just going to happen. Help your athlete learn to focus on the next play.
- 2. Visual Cues:** imagine a big, shiny red "delete button." Make it fun for your son or daughter and help them imagine a cartoonishly large button they can press after every play or game. (1) Learn a lesson, (2) press delete, (3) focus only on the next event that can be controlled. This process is used by elite athletes in every sport.
- 3. Use Pro Sports Interviews:** if you watch pro football, basketball or soccer with your son or daughter you will hear pro athletes talk about short term memory and moving on after the last game. Use these interviews as teaching tools. Keep your ear open. Sometimes when the lesson is coming from someone other than mom, from a pro athlete that the youth athlete looks up to, it can reinforce the lesson mom is teaching at home.

# 9

## **GET PRESENT – THE “CONTROLLABLES”**

The most common trait of mentally tough athletes is the ability to “get present.” And this skill takes intentional and repeated practice so it becomes a habit. And once it becomes a habit it requires constant attention to avoid the slide back into worrying about external factors.

The best example I’ve ever seen of “getting present” was Michael Jordan in game 5 of the 1997 NBA finals against the Utah Jazz. Jordan came out on the floor with the flu and a 103 temp. He literally took over the game and destroyed the Jazz with 38 points while fighting passing out on the floor. Jordan “got present.”

When “present” the athlete focuses on process-oriented goals rather than outcome, channels energy into what they control, and settles into a game-mode mind set where instincts are allowed to run the show (the zone).

So what is the trick? Easy to say, not so easy to do. How does an athlete get present? One useful exercise



to use is a concept called "Thought Brakes."

"Thought Brakes" works like this: once an athlete feels their focus drifting from the immediate moment...

(1) the athlete consciously acknowledges that distraction without judgment or fighting the distraction (put the brakes on);

(2) the athlete *briefly* examines where his/her focus should be (what does the athlete have control over in the immediate moment); and finally,

(3) the athlete allows themselves permission to refocus on the present.

Thought Brakes must be done quickly when in the middle of a game. This is not an existential go sit on the mountain top and contemplate the meaning of life kind of fix. Thought Brakes is a tool in the tool box to rapidly get back into the right mind set.

# Getting Present Summary:

Tips for tapping the Thought Brakes:

1. **Review:** the athlete should learn to review distracting thoughts that are outside of his or her control without judgment;
2. **Relax:** remind the athlete that there's absolutely no use in fighting back against distracting thoughts (stay relaxed) - allow these mental gremlins an exit door on every side of the brain;
3. **Example** – when someone says, “whatever you do....don't focus on a pink hippopotamus riding a unicycle” where does your focus go?

Distracting thoughts are a never-ending battle (stay relaxed). Think of Thought Brakes as an endless roll of duct tape, a quick fix to get back on track until the next “pink hippopotamus” comes along.

# 10

## PROCESS-ORIENTED GOALS

Work with your athlete to give up attachment to outcome.

Steve Jobs created Apple and was probably the most visionary and competitive entrepreneur of the last half century. He built an iconic, industry-disrupting, irreverent brand from the garage. And his reward? In 1985 the Apple Board of Directors, at the request of John Sculley (whom Jobs personally brought in to help lead Apple) fired Jobs...from his own company! That is a bad outcome.

What did Jobs do? Jobs had a choice. He had already achieved unreal success and financial wealth. Jobs could have retired. He could have scooped up his ball and gone home. He could have relaxed in a hot tub filled with crisp \$1,000,000 bills, cold drink in hand for the rest of his life. But that...he did not. Jobs fought back. Over the next decade Jobs bought into and built up Pixar, one of the most successful and profitable companies ever in the hyper-competitive and fickle film industry.

Oh ya. And Jobs built another computer company called Next to compete with Apple. Apple later bought Next when it brought Jobs back to save the company. In 2005 Jobs gave a brilliant commencement speech at Stanford (google "Jobs Stanford Commencement Speech" to watch the video) where he said getting fired from Apple was one of the best things that ever happened to him. Jobs had no control over the outcome (getting fired from his company) but what he could do is put his focus on the process of what mattered – learning from what had just happened, adjusting, overcoming adversity and building on the bad.

Remind the athlete that he or she may perform perfectly and still end up with an outcome that does not match the process and effort - a loss despite best effort. It doesn't seem fair. But it happens... a lot. Focus on process, release attachment to outcome.

So here is another real example. A painful example. Imagine you are a major league pitcher within a single out from pitching a rare perfect game (*only 23 pitchers have thrown perfect games in 135 years and 300,000 + games played*). On a routine ground ball the batter sprints to first base. The ball is riffled to the first baseman in time for the out. The batter is out. Clearly. Everyone in the stadium sees the play. Well, not everyone. The first base umpire blows it. That first base ump mistakenly calls the base runner safe. A blown call. No more perfect game. No bueno. What do

you do if you are that pitcher? How do you respond? Maybe your only chance at joining baseball's history books blown by a mistake outside your control. Your process was perfect; the outcome was not.

How could you change the above outcome *after* the game? You can't. Nobody can. How much time would you spend replaying over and over again the idea that you got cheated, you were wronged, and all the frustration and baggage that comes along with this kind of disappointment. And how does that baggage impact what you need to be focused on right now?

The above situation is a true story. This happened on June 10, 2010 to Detroit pitcher, Armando Galarraga. His response? He pressed the delete button. He took it in stride. He didn't let it eat him up inside. He moved on to the next play, next game, next season (and he never did pitch a perfect game, only 23 in history have). He put in the effort. His process was correct. The outcome within reach. But the outcome didn't match up with his process and effort. Galarraga's response after the game regarding the blown call, "Nobody's perfect."

The benefit of process-oriented goals is that the athlete gives up ownership on all the other factors outside of his or her control. The athlete can't control the last play, the play after the next play, refs, weather, injuries, personnel decisions, coaching strategies, bleacher noise, etc. So why bother burning

calories on stuff that can't be controlled?

Setting process-oriented goals allows the athlete to filter out the distractions. Process-oriented goals allow the athlete to "get present", it allows the athlete to focus on the factors within the athlete's control – effort, intensity, technique, anticipation, teamwork, etc. Something bad happens? So what. Learn something and move on to the next play. During competition, the athlete must achieve the balance of (1) tunnel-vision on the immediate task (process) while (2) maintaining a peripheral running understanding of the game situation (down and distance, game clock, opposing team tendencies, strategies and tactics). And that's it. There is only so much channel capacity to absorb what is going on in the heat of competition. That is *all* the athlete can and should be focused on to be effective.

## **Process-Oriented Goals Summary:**

- 1. Sync it Up:** Setting process-oriented goals allows the athlete to get present. And getting present allows the athlete to focus on the controllables.
- 2. Release the Outcome:** There's a ton of factors that are outside of an athlete's control that impact outcome. Stay dialed in on improving process and accept outcomes. Learn a lesson, press delete, and move on.
- 3. Even Steve Jobs got Fired:** Bad stuff is going to happen regardless of talent, preparation and effort. Learn a lesson, press delete, and move on.

# 11

## VISUALIZATION

Nothing worse than shallow sports clichés. But when they say, “The game is 90% mental,” believe them!

Stepping back, unplugging, and allowing yourself to “go to the movies” as golf legend Jack Nicholas called it is an important skill for youth athletes to learn. Visualization is a key to mastering the mental side of sports.

You’ve probably heard about the “free-throw” study. Briefly, three basketball groups were compared against themselves for free-throw percentage improvement:

**Group A** only worked on the physical skill of free-throws for 60 minute sessions;

**Group B** only worked on visualizing free-throw improvement for 60 minute sessions; and finally,

**Group C** spent 30 minutes on visualizing free-throw improvement followed by shooting free-throws for 30 minutes.



Group C, combining equal parts physical and mental skill development, showed the most improvement over the course of the study.

Just keep in mind that visualization is a very age-specific skill set to teach and learn. A common mistake sports-parents make is reading sports psychology books and applying the material the

same way to an 18-year old as to an eight year-old. The eight-year old will just get confused and overwhelmed with data overload when trying to absorb advanced mental training.

Visualizing is a useful skill for pre-season, pre-practice, pre-game, and pre-play preparation. Just remember that the athlete can “go to the mountain top” in the off-season, not so much when visualizing against a 30-second game clock. Adjust for the situation (pre-season, pre-practice, pre-game and pre-play.)

### **Steps for Visualization:**

**Unplug:** phone, tablet, laptop, desktop, podcast, streaming, clouding, social media, homework, housework, TV, radio, conversation, et al. Turn. It. Off. Turn it all off;

**“Go to the Movies”:** the athlete mentally walks

through the steps (the process) of what he or she wants to achieve:

This could be a Wide Receiver's stance, start & release against an aggressive press coverage cornerback (very specific), or developing time management and improving academic performance during the upcoming season (very broad)

**The athlete must slowly and intentionally work through the proper technique for whatever is being visualized – lazy, haphazard visualization just leads to sloppy performance on the field.**

**"Release the Outcome":** after the athlete works through what he or she wants to accomplish it's time to get the inner-critic out of the way and let instincts kick in - for anyone that has tried to "teach" themselves to repeat a consistent golf swing you know what this means - you're half way through the backswing and your brain starts kicking you in the shin – the brain says, "Is this right? Did I do it this way last time? No this doesn't feel right, adjust, adjust, adjust!!!"

Final tip for visualization – spend time visualizing the good, the bad, and the ugly: use visualization for (1) defusing possible worst case scenarios, (2) improving specific skill sets, and (3) long range goal setting.

Visualization is about creating a mindset that allows the athlete to relax and perform. It is about removing the pressure and anxiety of outcome-based goals, it is about easing (not forcing) the inner-critic out the side door, it about focusing on the process and controllables, and accepting results – however the chips fall. Good or bad outcome – learn something, press delete, move on.

## **Visualization Summary:**

- 1. Free-Throw Study:** Combining physical practice with intentional visualization of what the athlete wants to get better at creates the most improvement over time.
- 2. Be Intentional:** when visualizing, the athlete must create very intentional pictures of what he or she wants to improve. Focused or lazy visualization will carry over on to the field.
- 3. Visualization Range:** use this skill for pre-season, pre-practice, pre-game and pre-play. It can be very specific (how to approach the next play) or it can be very broad (setting specific goals for next season. Visualization can be used for athletic improvement, leadership and academics (they all work together). And finally, visualization can be used to defuse possible worst case scenarios, learn new skills, or improve upon already developed skills. Visualization helps the athlete develop a winner's mindset.

# 12

## **BENCH PLAYER TO STARTER**

My only athletic claim to fame – somehow I was moved from the bench to starting point guard on my eighth-grade select basketball team. The guy I replaced in the starting rotation went on to play in the NBA for more than a decade. Needless to say, I was anxious and completely thrown out of my comfort zone. I didn't see myself as the starter, and I sure didn't see myself as a starter in front of my NBA-bound friend and teammate. I was not mentally prepared to move from the bench to starter. And it showed. Quickly. Painfully. My first pass went to nobody in particular and out of bounds. I then followed it up with an "air ball" free throw. Not good. I got yanked and never started again. Back to the bench.

A lot of time is spent researching and advising on how stars can develop coping skills for when they get benched. The talk is about developing mental toughness, improving, being a good teammate, not sulking, respecting the coach. All good stuff.

But what about a role reversal? What about the kid that's been a steady role player and is then suddenly pushed into a starting role? A role player has usually developed a comfort zone where he or she goes into a game when the game is not on the line. There is no pressure for the role player when the team is up or down by 20 points with two minutes left in the game. But what about when a team is up or down by two points with 20 minutes to play? That is a very different level of pressure and set of expectations to deal with.

So, do some prep work on the front end with your youth athlete. Spend time in the offseason building the athlete's confidence and coping skills for this scenario (setting process-oriented goals; getting present; and controlling the controllables.) Be ready. When your student-athlete earns the opportunity to move from the bench to a starting role hopefully you have done your part as a supporting sports-parent in prepping for this opportunity.

The good thing here is that no additional tools are required. We're simply using the skills discussed to expand an athlete's comfort zone – focusing on process-oriented goals, visualization, understanding that future worst case scenarios are not “world ending” events, controlling the controllables, etc.

Youth sports are so important for developing life skills. If a youth athlete plays team sports from age eight to 18, that is a full decade of learning mental toughness,

discipline, time management, coping skills, leadership, teamwork. Think about how much better prepared that student-athlete (future entrepreneur or business leader) will be when tasked with leading a “bet the company” project that is outside his or her comfort zone.

## **Bench Player to Starter Summary:**

- 1. Different Pressure:** moving from the bench to the starting lineup presents a different kind of pressure for the athlete. Discuss this in the offseason and work on confidence and visualization of handling this challenge.
- 2. Worst Case Scenario:** the first time an athlete moves from the bench to the starting lineup it may go badly. Talk about this in advance. Anchor the idea that it is not the end of the world if the outcome comes out badly. It is counter-intuitive but it really helps reduce anxiety and pressure to preview potential failures. The athlete should learn to see any failure as just another learning opportunity and not a final judgment.
- 3. Perspective:** youth sports play a huge part in developing life skills. Playing youth football is not about getting a college scholarship (only 3% of high school athletes earn a scholarship.) It is not about preparing to play in the NFL (only .08% of high school senior football players make it to the Big Show.) Youth sports is about learning leadership, teamwork, discipline, dealing with setbacks and unexpected pressure and expectations. Don't let a single setback or series of setbacks cause your athlete to quit sports. Set those anchors in advance to keep them motivated and engaged in youth sports.



# 13

## GRIT VS LAZY TALENT

Mental toughness beats lazy talent over time, every time.

Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods had phenomenal, unreal athletic talent in their prime. But what made Jordan and Woods scary competitors, according to their peers, was their grit, mental toughness, resilience and tunnel-vision. Jordan and Woods would simply outlast and gut it out longer than their competition.

This “grit” mindset causes the competition to pack it in early. There was a great story about Jordan (after one of his many retirements) that almost immediately after ending his basketball career he would be out on the driving range before sunrise practicing, practicing and practicing his golf swing. That is “grit.”

There is no mistaking who has the mental edge before kickoff. Both teams know it. You can feel it. You can sense it. You don't need a body language expert to see who is mentally prepared to dominate. When the Seattle Seahawks destroyed the explosive Denver Broncos offense in the 2014 Super Bowl it was clear

what team had the mental edge. The Broncos set offensive league records that year in passing yards, points scored, touchdowns and games with 50+ points. The Seahawks handled the Broncos 43-8. The Broncos had "packed it in" before the coin toss.

Encourage this "grit" mindset in your student-athlete - develop a mental edge and drive to outlast the competition.

## **Grit vs. Lazy Talent Summary:**

- 1. Grit:** grit is the most important determining factor in long-term success. Jordan, Woods, Jobs all had grit. They had talent, yes. But it is grit that set them apart from the competition.
- 2. Lazy Talent:** professional sports, business and the arts are littered with washouts who possess incredible natural talent. But they are lazy. And they eventually get pushed aside by those who had desire and resilience and grit.
- 3. Mindset:** developing a grit mindset will carry over into your athlete's future career and personal life. Way after your child's athletic days are over they will have a tool kit that allows them to get through the tough days, to stick with whatever difficult situation comes up and outlast the "bad outcomes" of life.

# 14

## THE SEVEN MENTAL DWARFS

If this is your child's first sports season, review those areas where he or she struggles making progress outside of sports (school work, math, more math, even more math, chores, playing nice in the sandbox, etc). It usually involves a combination of these seven mental roadblocks:

- procrastination;
- perfectionism;
- fear of failure;
- analysis paralysis;
- limited comfort zone;
- indecision; or
- complacency.

Expect to see these same mental roadblocks pop up in athletic development. Create a game plan using the ideas in this book to address these issues and keep the athlete motivated.

And who knows, mom. Developing those life skills in sports may carry over into the chores department.

Perhaps the dishes will be cleared, the garbage taken out, the bike put away without you having to ask ten times! That's the great thing about youth sports and all the benefits it provides.

# **The Seven Mental Dwarfs Summary:**

- 1. Patterns:** whatever your child struggles with outside of sports is what he or she will struggle with in sports. Expect to see those dwarfs and have a game plan in advance.
- 2. Tool Kit:** use the same simple tool kit for dealing with these mental dwarfs – process oriented goals, getting present, control the controllables. And repeat again and again. Life's problems just get more complex every season and every year. Having this tool kit and improving on this set of skills should play huge dividends over time. And the tools do not need to be complex! Set process-oriented goals, get present, and control the controllables. That's it!
- 3. Redundant Department of Redundancy:** whatever the problem, in sports or in life - Set Process-Oriented Goals; Get Present; Control the Controllables.

**Final Thoughts** - So we're at the end of Volume I. In Volume II I will cover athletic skill development and NCAA recruiting guidance for sports-parents, with a focus on divorced moms. I really hope you found the ideas useful and worth a try. If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me. Thank you for reading and continued success on your sports-parenting journey.

# Resources

## Websites:

California Interscholastic Federation (or google your state's high school governing program): [www.cifstate.org](http://www.cifstate.org)

NCAA Eligibility Center: [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org)

NCAA Recruiting Guidelines: [www.NCAA.org](http://www.NCAA.org)

NAIA Eligibility Center: [www.playnaia.org](http://www.playnaia.org)

National Letter of Intent: [www.national-letter.org](http://www.national-letter.org)

Recruiting Advice for Sports-Parents:  
[www.freerecruitingwebinar.org](http://www.freerecruitingwebinar.org)

Office of Postsecondary Education (athletic program data):  
[www.ope.ed.gov](http://www.ope.ed.gov)

USA Football (football parenting): [www.usafootball.com](http://www.usafootball.com)

Positive Coaching Alliance (sports-parenting):  
[www.positivecoach.org](http://www.positivecoach.org)

Centers for Disease Control (Concussion Management):  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)



**Books:**

*Top Dog – The Science of Winning and Losing*, Po Bronson  
& Ashley Merryman

*Getting to Yes – Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*,  
Roger Fisher & William Ury

*The Collaborative Way to Divorce*, Stuart Webb

*David and Goliath*, Malcolm Gladwell

# Thank You Gift from Me to You!

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As a special "thank you" to early readers, the first 10 readers who post an honest review of this book at Amazon and email the review to me will receive a free set of sports-parenting exercises! These are skill development worksheets you can use with your youth athlete to create a successful experience for both the athlete and sports parent.

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**Brian@ZeroOffseason.com**

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