

Parent Like a Champion

SPORTS PROVIDE COUNTLESS PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS FOR OUR CHILDREN, from creating healthy physical habits to promoting peer interaction and teamwork. In the Catholic school setting, they can also provide a vehicle for spiritual growth, helping children develop the cardinal virtues of fortitude, justice, prudence and temperance. To maximize these benefits, it's important that parents create a positive relationship with coaches and administrators, working with them to provide the best experience for our children.

Tips for Sports Parents:

Be Positive – In a study used by the Play Like a Champion Today Educational Series in national Coach & Parent workshops, children were asked to rank why they play sports. The overwhelming winner: *to have fun!* As parents, this should inform how we approach sports as well. Parents should remain positive and encouraging with athletes, coaches, officials and opponents. Remember that it's just a game! While watching our children compete can sometimes be stressful, remaining positive will keep the experience fun for everyone involved.

Have Realistic Expectations – We all want to see children excel in their chosen sports. Coaches and parents should work together to develop the abilities God gave to each child and to maximize his or her athletic potential. But while setting lofty goals is good, it's important to remain realistic. According to the NCAA, less than 6% of high school athletes will go on to play sports in college at any level and .01% of high school athletes will play professionally (2018 NCAA Probability of Competing Beyond High School). As parents, we should enjoy watching our children in the present moment and let the future work itself out later.

Embrace Your Role – The role of the sports parent is to love and support your athletes by helping them to set goals and to become a great teammate. Catholic sports parents should help create a positive environment in the stands by encouraging all athletes. Athletes, coaches and officials also have distinct roles to play in the sports experience. Parents should embrace their own role while allowing others to play

their parts. Trust that coaches and officials know what they're doing and have the best interests of your child at heart.

Get Involved – Being a sports parent provides plenty of great opportunities to get involved with your child's team. Find out if your school has a parent committee or booster club on which you can serve and provide valuable support for coaches and administration. This can be a great way to help provide a great experience for the team.

Respect Boundaries – Good communication is key to your child's sports experience. If you need to speak with a coach or administrator, find out when they are available and how they best communicate. Always be respectful and remember that coaches and administrators want what is best for your child and the team. Think about what is and is not appropriate for parents to discuss with coaches. In general, topics such as playing time or your child's position should be left to the student-athlete and coach, while issues related to your child's health and safety are always fair game. Competition can bring out strong emotions, so if you have a non-safety related concern, consider waiting 24-hours before contacting a coach.

Practice Sportsmanship – Catholic schools make it a point to encourage and develop virtuous behavior; this should flow into extracurricular activities as well. Parents have a responsibility to help create an environment that promotes great sportsmanship by remaining positive and calm in the stands. Set a precedent that supports the values promoted in our Catholic schools and treats everyone – coaches, officials, athletes and spectators – with the respect and dignity they deserve as a child of God. Sports provide a wonderful experience for the entire family. By embracing your role as a sports parent, you can help provide a positive environment in which children can develop skills and grow in virtue while having fun. Together, we can give our children the sports experience they deserve!

*Contributed by Peter Piscitello
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