

# Life Lessons

By Rocky Harmon

The phone rings. It is a soccer parent, and they have a complaint. It seems that Julie played only half of yesterday's game. And to make matters worse, the coach played her in defense instead of up front! My caller is demanding that their daughter play as much as anyone else, and that she does so in her rightful spot – striker!

The above scenario has been played out far too often in my career as a Coaching Director. Complaints about playing time and positional choices are often heard by coaches in my occupation. Although all coaches face these problems on some level, it is the youth soccer club coach who must endure the most.

Parents are slower to criticize the high school coach, unless they want to sell their house and move to another district. However, they CAN change clubs, or worse, bring pressure on the other parents to change (get rid of) coaches. The only loyalty is to their kid, not the team or club- not to mention the game itself.

This lack of club loyalty and willingness to jump ship is a major factor in the lack of player development in this country. Worse, burn- out of top level players in teenage years is a direct result of these overbearing parents.

Parents need to step back and let the game teach their kids some of the life lessons sports can teach. You don't always win. You don't always get to play striker. If you want to play more, work harder in training. Soccer is by no means the only sport that can teach these lessons, but the youth soccer parent many times circumvents this learning process by their interference.

One only has to look at the top local players, to see supportive parents who let their kids find their own way in the game. No screaming on the sideline, no 10:30pm calls to the coach. Just parents who teach the passion for effort, for the right to compete. As former pro golfer Mike Reid said "sports is like life with the volume turned up". We need to let our children hear it, but we can't listen for them.

Go to training. See if your child is enjoying themselves. Are they active? Are they learning? Are they getting multiple touches? If the answers to these questions is yes- then relax and step back. This is not the last time they may be in a less than ideal situation. Lets see how THEY deal with it. If we solve all the problems for our children, how can we expect them to be able to overcome obstacles latter in life?

If we go to the game and coach from the sideline, aren't we making decisions for these players that they should be making themselves? It's time we let the players play, then we will see some real development; not just quality players, but quality young adults.

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