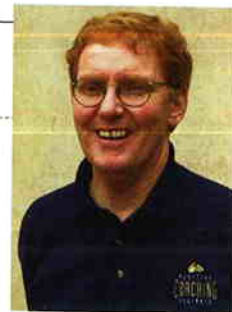




PositiveCoachingAlliance

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Jim Thompson is the founder and director of the Positive Coaching Alliance.

Parents: Build a Partnership with the Coach

Research shows that when parents and teachers work together, children tend to do better in school. At US Lacrosse and Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA), we have no reason to think it's any different in youth sports.

Parents who want their child to do well in sports should develop a partnership with the coach. The following are some tips – for parents who are not coaching their child – to create a coach/parent partnership that will enable athletes to get the most out of their lacrosse experience.

■ **Recognize the Coaches' Commitment**

For whatever reason, you have chosen not to coach the team. The coaches have made a commitment that involves many, many hours of preparation beyond the hours spent at practices and games. Remember this whenever something goes awry during the season.

■ **Make Early, Positive Contact**

As soon as you know who your child's coaches are going to be, contact them to introduce yourself. To the extent that you can do so, ask if there is any way you can help. By getting to know the coaches early, it will be much easier to talk with them later if problems arise.

■ **Fill Coaches' Emotional Tanks**

When the coaches do something you like, let them know.



To learn about how to take advantage of the US Lacrosse partnership with PCA, visit www.positivecoach.org or call (866) 725-0024. More information also is available by clicking on "Sport Development" at www.uslacrosse.org.

Coaching is a difficult job, and most coaches only hear from parents when they want to complain. This will help fill the coaches' emotional tanks and will motivate them to do an even better job. Having recognized these positives will make it easier to discuss any problems later.

■ **Avoid Putting Players in the Middle**

Imagine a situation around the dinner table, in which a child's parents complain in front of her about how poorly her math teacher is teaching fractions. How would this impact this student's motivation in class? How would it affect her interest in mathematics?

While this scenario may seem farfetched, when we move away from school to youth sports, it is all too common for parents to share their disapproval of a coach with their children, whether it is about coaching tactics or playing time. This puts a young athlete in a bind. Divided loyalties do not make it easy for a child to do his or her best. Conversely, when parents support a coach, it is that much easier for the child to put her wholehearted effort into learning to play well.

If you think your child's coaches are not handling a situation well, *do not* tell that to your child. Rather, seek a meeting with the coaches where you can talk about it. Talk with the coaches first. Most coaches want to do the best job possible, and you owe them the

opportunity to respond to your concerns before involving others.

■ **Let the Coach Coach**

It can be very confusing for a player to hear someone other than the coach yelling out instructions during a game or practice, so avoid giving your child instructions about how to play. Have a tactical idea? Go to the coaches and offer it to them. Let them decide if it works for the team. If they decide not to use it, let it be. Getting to decide how to teach certain skills and choosing which strategies and tactics to use is a privilege the coaches have earned by making the commitment to coach. If this paragraph sounds particularly difficult to you, maybe it is time for you to sign up as an assistant coach!

■ **Encourage Other Parents to Honor the Game**

Hold yourself to a high standard. Never show disrespect for the other team or the officials. But more than that, encourage other parents to also Honor the Game. If a parent of a player on your team begins to berate the official, gently remind him or her, "Remember to Honor the Game." The coaches on your team will appreciate this help on the sidelines.

Together, coaches and parents can make youth and high school lacrosse an even more powerful and positive experience for all involved. Good luck in establishing a partnership with your child's coaches. It will make a difference! **LM**