

PARENT

POCKET GUIDE



TrueSport®




**TrueSport®**

*You're likely wondering  
"What is TrueSport?"  
Good question.*

*We're a community-based movement  
that champions the positive values and  
life lessons learned through sport. That  
means we're more about perseverance  
than power plays; leadership than  
lay-ups; fair play than forehands.*

# WHY TRUESPORT MATTERS



**85% OF ADULTS BELIEVE YOUTH SPORTS SHOULD REINFORCE POSITIVE VALUES LIKE HONESTY, FAIR PLAY, AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS**

85%



**35% BELIEVE THAT SPORT IS ACTUALLY EMPHASIZING THESE VALUES**

35%

*There is a values crisis in youth sports. 85% of parents believe that youth sport is not living up to its full potential. We want sport to reinforce values like fair play and respect for others, but we all know in reality there's an overemphasis on competitiveness and winning. Parents are often overinvolved and kids are getting burnt out. Sports aren't just about playing anymore.*

*We all love a victory, but it shouldn't come at the expense of the important life lessons that can be learned on the field. Only 35% of us believe that youth sport is currently emphasizing the values of teamwork, hard work, and goal setting.*

*TrueSport is here to lead the cultural shift in youth sport, to put the emphasis back on the multidimensional, lifelong benefits of playing, training, and competing.*

# WHAT ARE YOUR VALUES AS A SPORT PARENT?

*You don't need us to tell you that you're the most important person in your child's life. Or that your actions directly influence your child's behavior and attitude. That's Parenting 101.*

*But we have all seen times when the intense emotions associated with sport have caused a loss of that perspective. And understandably so.*

*We all want our kids to taste success. But we all want that success to be achieved without losing sight of what we value.*

*So we wanted to take a moment to explain the core values of TrueSport, and how we think you can integrate them into your sport parenting.*

*TrueSport Values:*

RESPECT  
TEAMWORK  
INTEGRITY  
RESPONSIBILITY  
COURAGE

## *Integration Strategies*

- *Applaud your child by embracing her play no matter the level of competition and her teammates by giving sincere compliments. Respect the coach by allowing him to lead the team, and the officials by thanking them and not interfering.*
- *So many people—coaches, teammates, teammates' parents, officials—all play important roles in helping children grow into confident humans who know how to play by the rules and work together. Remember, the way you interact with those teammates speaks volumes to your child.*
- *Be mindful of your attitude and conversations surrounding your young athlete. As you know, kids are more perceptive than we think. Pressure from you, either spoken or unspoken, can ricochet through them and harm their sport experience.*
- *Your child's performance is not—and should never be—remotely related to your love or support for him. It's easy to unknowingly fall into that trap. One athletic situation in which you're too critical with your words or your body language has the potential to erase all the praise you give him, both in the sports arena and life.*
- *Finally, be bold enough to ask other parents to behave; to allow your child to make the decisions about her choice sport and level of participation; and when to let your child step away from a sport when it's appropriate.*

# WHO IS ON YOUR TEAM?

*It takes a village to do many things related to parenting, and athletics are no different. Having a range of people influence your child's play and perspective is a good thing; maybe something her coach says unconsciously ups her intensity, or maybe a teammate exhibiting above-and-beyond sportsmanship spurs her to do the same.*

*Perhaps most importantly, though, it's great to remember, especially if you become overwhelmed with emotion, that somebody always has your child's back.*

## **CHILD**

*A child first, an athlete second.*

Her brain is still developing, her limbs are still growing, and her perspective on the world changes by the hour, if not the minute. What may be easy today may feel impossible tomorrow. What she was crazy enthusiastic for yesterday, she may claim to hate today. Commitment is important—finishing the season, for example—but so is flexibility.

## **PARENT**

*A parent first, a practice partner sometimes, a coach only when asked.*

Your role is to provide sport and physical activity opportunities for your child, while also reinforcing the character building they provide: heeding commitment; embracing teamwork; building confidence; setting goals; learning to win and lose graciously; respecting the game, coach, and all players.

## **TEAMMATES**

*Friends who support and accompany your child along as he grows up.*

While the physical abilities of teammates may be vastly different than your child's, the connection between teammates is the most valuable aspect of being on a team. Kids who play the same sport naturally have a common bond, a friendship base that will only grow with time, common goals, and support of one another. Nurture the friendships on and off the field.

## **COACH**

*A leader who teaches sport—and simultaneously, critical life skills and lessons.*

Since life lessons are learned and reinforced through sport, you should make sure the coach has values and expectations similar to yours and your child's. What's more, be sure that the coach intentionally teaches and emphasizes sportsmanship.

# 10 GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL SPORT PARENTS



*Whether you talk the language of front handsprings or free throws, the tenets of being a successful sport parent apply across all sports and sidelines. Do your best to heed them, and both you and your child will emerge as winners.*



# 1

## YOUTH ATHLETE



## YOUTH ATHLETE: EMPHASIS ON THE FIRST WORD, NOT THE SECOND. ALWAYS.

*Here's why: Research indicates the emotional part of the brain matures in the mid 20's, while physical growth typically peaks in the mid-teens. That means your child is living in a rapidly-developing body and mind that may feel foreign at times.*

# 2

## SPORT PARENT



## SPORT PARENT: EMPHASIS ON THE SECOND WORD, NOT THE FIRST. NO EXCEPTIONS.

*A sign seen at fields across the country:*

***Please Remember***

- 1. These are kids.***
- 2. This is a game.***
- 3. Parents should cheer for everyone.***
- 4. The referees are human.***
- 5. You and your child do not play for the \_\_\_\_\_.***

***[fill in the blank of a local pro team].***

# 3

YOURS are  
not THEIRS



**YOUR DREAMS ARE NOT THEIR DREAMS, EVEN IF HE'S GOT YOUR KILLER FOREHAND OR HER 50-METER BACKSTROKE REMINDS YOU OF YOUR GLORY DAYS.**

*When the intensity at a competition is too much, consider the following tactics to “dial it back”:*

- *Sit farther away from the competition or remove yourself from it totally.*
- *Talk to other parents who are more relaxed.*
- *Read the paper, check your email, grab a snack.*
- *Take some deep breaths and remind yourself that these are children playing a game.*

# 4

WIN or  
LOSE



**BEST QUESTION TO ASK AFTER ANY GAME, WIN OR LOSE: “DID YOU HAVE FUN?”**  
**NEXT QUESTION: “HUNGRY?”**

*Some kids will want to analyze the game immediately, but many will be ready to move on—or need time to come down from their emotions. Pay attention to how your child responds to your interactions after a game, and let that be your guide. If you want to gently address something, the best time is before the next practice.*

*Exception: The only time you should talk competition after a game...is if your child exhibited poor sportsmanship.*

# 5

## ROLES at COMPETITION



## ROLES AT COMPETITION, COACH LEADS; ATHLETE PLAYS; PARENT CHEERS.

*The only exception: If coaches aren't modeling good sportsmanship, or if your child gets injured.*

# 6

## LESSONS OF SPORT



**THE LESSONS OF SPORT—  
TEAMWORK, PERSEVERANCE,  
GOAL SETTING, HARD WORK—  
ARE UNIVERSAL WHEN  
PROGRAMS ARE PROPERLY  
RUN. LEVEL OF PLAY IS  
SECONDARY; LESSONS CAN BE  
LEARNED AT ALL LEVELS.**

*"Somewhere behind the athlete you've become and the hours of practice and the coaches who have pushed you is a little girl who fell in love with the game and never looked back... play for her."*

*- Mia Hamm -*

# 7

ENGAGE  
CORRECTLY



**BE ENGAGED** IN THE TEAM WITHOUT BEING IN THE WAY. ASK THE COACH IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU CAN DO TO HELP. (AND IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING: ONLY POSITIVE COMMENTS TO ANY CHILD.)

*Specifics: Shag balls, take stats if appropriate, run the scoreboard, make a snack chart, set up for games.*

# 8

YES,  
only 2%



**2% OF ATHLETES RECEIVE COLLEGE ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS. EMBRACE WHERE YOUR CHILD IS NOW—INSTEAD OF DREAMING ABOUT WHAT HE LIKELY WON'T RECEIVE YEARS FROM NOW.**

*Another fact: Of the 460,000 NCAA student athletes, less than 2% will play professionally. Savor your son playing right field in the park today, instead of getting jazzed about him playing at Wrigley Field.*

# 9

## NO TRASH TALKING



**NO TRASH TALKING.** NOT ABOUT THE OTHER TEAM, NOT ABOUT PLAYERS ON YOUR CHILD'S TEAM, AND NEVER ABOUT THE COACH OR YOUR CHILD'S PERFORMANCE.

*Much easier said than done at times, we realize, but when you talk poorly of others, you may be teaching your child to boost his view of himself by putting down others. Not a helpful lesson.*

# 10

## IT'S JUST A NUMBER



**REMEMBER THAT A SCORE IS A FLAT, SINGLE NUMBER; YOUR CHILD IS A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL, COMPLICATED BEING THAT NEEDS CONSTANT LOVE AND SUPPORT THROUGH THE JOURNEY OF WINS AND LOSSES.**

*"Most talented players don't always succeed. Some don't even make the team. It's more what's inside."*

*- Brett Favre -*







*We'd love to continue the conversation  
and hear your triumphs and trials as a sport parent.*

*Join us at the TrueSport website:*

[www.TrueSport.org](http://www.TrueSport.org)

*Check out our TrueSport Facebook page:*

[www.facebook.com/TrueSportUSA](http://www.facebook.com/TrueSportUSA)

*Tag us at [#TrueSportChampion](#)*

*and [#TrueSportInAction](#)*

*on X & Instagram.*



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