



INTERNATIONALS *Soccer Club*



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Internationals Soccer Club: A History of Excellence

Parents Are of Paramount Importance, Win or Lose

by Positive Coaching Alliance

Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) sees four main constituencies in any youth sports operation: athletes, administrators, coaches, and last but not least (far from it!), parents. Parents are the ultimate arbiters who determine what flies and what dies. If they don't like the way your operation serves them and their children, they vote with their feet and their wallet.

Therefore, it is extremely important to the health of club soccer that parents, coaches and administrators agree on what youth sports culture will best serve the children in their care. When all four groups are on the same page, youth sports can be the most beautiful, enriching, character-building experience that any child (and parent) can have.

In this context, PCA particularly appreciates "Win or Lose: A Guide To Sports Parenting." This brief book by Dan Saferstein, Ph.D., is a great boon to anyone concerned with the role of a sports parent. Best of all, Dr. Saferstein is a sport parent, whose son, Adam, plays for US Club Soccer member Michigan Wolves.

In the introduction, Saferstein posits, "We sometimes make mistakes in the stands or in the car ride home, just as our children make mistakes on the field. These mistakes are part of the learning process for everyone...Young athletes run into problems when they think they can get by with a half-hearted effort, and so do parents.

"What does a whole-hearted effort mean as a sports parent? I don't think it necessarily means spending more money on private instruction or cheering louder from the sidelines, but it could mean paying more attention to how your behavior is affecting your child's athletic experience and less attention to the wins and losses."

Those sentiments are very much in keeping with PCA philosophy. In the Sport Parent Workshops PCA conducts throughout the country, we encourage attendees to become "Second-Goal Parents."

The term draws from the notion of a Double-Goal Coach, whose first goal is to win, and whose second, more important goal is to teach life lessons through sports. A Second-Goal Parent focuses on the second goal, teaching life lessons, not on winning, which is the player's focus.

Some ways in which Second-Goal Parent behavior manifests:

- Wait until well after a game to discuss the game with your child;
- Instead of telling children what they did wrong, ask open-ended questions about their experience and perceptions of the game;
- Guide children toward discussion of what life lessons they learned about perseverance, teamwork and sportsmanship.



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Saferstein, in his own way, and in his own words, agrees with these philosophies and provides specific, constructive advice on handling a variety of challenges inherent to being a sports parent. Much of the advice, while profound, is summed up in the deceptively simple headings for each of the book's 26 single-page chapters. Among the most poignant: "Be the Sports Parent You Wish You Had" and "Forget About Scholarships For Awhile" and "Know When to Call Time- Out."

The closing chapter, "Win or Lose," knits this neat, little book together: "When you become a sports parent, you take an oath to always be there for your child. Win or lose, you will love them; win or lose, you will respect them; win or lose, you will accept them with all their strengths and limitations. The oath of sports parenthood can be even more binding than marriage, because a child can't go out and look for a more supportive parent, and a parent can't go out and look for a seemingly more talented child."

PCA recommends this book as a primer for first-time sports parents and a reference for the more experienced. "Win or Lose" contains messages complementary to those that PCA and US Club Soccer are spreading and can help create a healthy, beautiful club soccer experience for all.

To order "Win or Lose: A Guide To Sports Parenting" contact the author Dan Saferstein at dansafertein@earthlink.net.