



Welcome to “Second-Goal” Parenting™

Positive Coaching Alliance and CIF welcome you to this section of the CIF website, which focuses on sports parenting. Positive Coaching Alliance’s model of coaching, Double-Goal® Coaching, refers to a first goal, winning, and a second, more-important goal, teaching life lessons through sports. Therefore, Second-Goal Parenting refers to parents focusing on that “second-goal” of helping your student-athlete take life lessons from sports.

These coaching and sports parenting techniques help players learn how to win on and off the field, using competition to teach lessons in teamwork, discipline, compassion and handling adversity. Players can then apply those lessons in school, jobs and their family lives.

The remaining pages in this section of CIF’s website detail three methods that “Second-Goal” Parents can use to help their student-athletes take life lessons from sports:

- Establishing a Parent-Coach Partnership
- Empowering Conversations With Your Children
- Guidelines for “Honoring the Game”

These methods and many others are covered in *The High School Sports Parent: Developing Triple-Impact Competitors* by Jim Thompson, Founder and Executive Director of Positive Coaching Alliance, which is available at <http://www.balancesportspublishing.com/Books/tabid/364/Default.aspx>.

To register for the online Second-Goal Parent Course, visit <http://www.positivecoach.org/ParentCourse.aspx>.

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“Second-Goal” Parenting™ Method #1: Establishing a Coach-Parent Partnership

Research is clear that when parents and teachers work together a student tends to do better in school. There is no reason to think that it is any different for student-athletes whose parents and coaches cooperate. Following are guidelines for how parents can partner with coaches to create the best possible high school sports experience for their student-athletes.

1. **Recognize the Commitment the Coach Has Made:** Coaches commit to many, many hours of preparation beyond the hours spent at practices and games. Recognize their commitments and the fact that they are not doing it because of the pay! Try to remember that if anything goes awry during the season.
2. **Make Early, Positive Contact with Coaches:** You may already know the coaches of the team your student-athlete is trying to make. If not, get to know those coaches as soon as your son or daughter is brought onto the team. Introduce yourself and let the coaches know you want to help your student-athlete have the best experience possible this season. Offer to help the coaches in any way you are able, such as being a “team parent” responsible for organizing cheering sections or any necessary car pools for the other parents. Getting to know the coach early and establishing a positive relationship makes it easier to talk later if a problem arises.
3. **Fill the Coach's Emotional Tank:** A Double-Goal Coach® fills players’ emotional tanks (like a car’s gas tank, when people’s “emotional tanks” are full, they can go anywhere, and when they are empty, they can go nowhere). But coaches need their tanks filled, too! When coaches do something you like, let them know it. Coaching is difficult and many coaches only hear from parents when they have complaints. Truthful, specific praise that fills coaches’ tanks will contribute to their doing an even better job. Also, if you’ve given credit where credit is due, it will be easier to raise any issues that occur later. Many coaches do a lot of things well. Take the time to look for them.
4. **Don't Put the Player in the Middle:** Imagine a situation around the dinner table, in which you complain in front of your children about how poorly their math teacher teaches fractions. Wouldn't that affect their motivation and respect for that teacher? Same with coaches. Conversely, when parents support coaches, it is that much easier for players to compete wholeheartedly. If you think your student-athlete’s coaches are not handling situations well, do not tell your son or daughter. Rather, seek a meeting with the coaches.
5. **Don't Give Instructions During a Game or Practice:** You are not one of the coaches, and it can be very confusing and un-nerving for players to hear someone other than the coach yelling out instructions during a game. You may have become accustomed during youth sports to sharing tactical ideas with coaches, but many high school coaches have much more training and experience than the typical volunteer youth sports coach.
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“Second-Goal” Parenting™ Method #2: Empowering Conversations With Your Student-Athlete

Conversations are the glue between people, the essential element in a strong relationship. Many parents fall into the trap of thinking that in a conversation with their children, it is their job to talk and their children’s job to listen. Actually, it is both parents’ and children’s jobs to listen *and* talk in a conversation. It is important that parents proactively seek conversations about the high school sports experience with their players. Here are some suggestions for how to engage your student-athlete in a conversation about sports.

1. **Establish Your Goal—A Conversation Among Equals:** Conversations occur between equals. Prepare yourself for conversations with your student-athletes by remembering that high school sports is their thing, not yours. Support your student-athletes and let them know you’re on their side. Your goal in conversations is not to give advice on becoming a better player, but to help them get the most from their high school sports experience.
2. **Adopt a Tell-Me-More Attitude:** Adopt the attitude that you want your student-athletes to say more (“I really want to hear what you have to say”), and then listen to them -- even if you don’t agree and don’t like what you hear. Think of these conversations as an Olympic event with judges. A conversation that rates a 9 or a 10 is one in which the student-athletes talk more and the parents listen more.
3. **Use Open-Ended Questions:** Some questions lend themselves to one-word responses. “How was school today?” “Fine.” To get your student-athlete to talk at length, ask questions that elicit longer, more thoughtful responses.
 - “What was the most enjoyable part of today’s practice?”
 - “What worked well in your game?”
 - “What didn’t turn out so well?”
 - “What did you learn that can help you in the future?”
 - “What do you want to work on before the next game?”
4. **Also ask about life-lesson and character issues:** “Any thoughts on what you learned in today’s game that might apply to other parts of your life?” Even if you saw the whole game, get your student-athlete’s perspectives.

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5. **Show You Are Listening.** Make it obvious that you are paying attention through nonverbal communication, such as eye contact and nodding, and verbal "listening noises" ("uh-huh," "hmmm," "interesting," etc.).
6. **Let Your Student-Athlete Set the Terms:** Right after a game, when emotions may be riding high, consider waiting until your student-athletes show they are ready to talk, instead of forcing conversation. Boys may take longer than girls to show their readiness. If your student-athletes prefer briefer discussions, occasionally defer to their wishes. If they feel every conversation is going to be a long one, they'll likely try to avoid them. Be comfortable with some silence. Stick with it and they will open up.
7. **Connect through activity.** Sometimes the best way to spark conversation is through an activity your student-athlete enjoys. A card game or a quiet meal together gives your high schoolers the mental or emotional space to volunteer their ideas about their sports experience. This especially is true for boys, who often resist a direct adult-style of conversation.
8. **Enjoy:** The most important reason why you should listen to your student-athletes with a tell-me-more attitude: Because they will want to talk to you, and as they (and you) grow older, you will find there is no greater gift than enjoying conversations with them.

These approaches help ensure that parents and their student-athletes share common values and expectations for what they want from the high school sports experience. In turn, that means players are more likely to maintain their enthusiasm for sports and perform better. Of course, parents and student-athletes alike benefit from generally strengthening their relationships.

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“Second-Goal” Parenting™ Method #3: Guidelines for Honoring the Game

The key to cultivating optimal adult behavior (and reducing misbehavior) around high school sports is “Honoring the Game.” To remember the tenets of Honoring the Game, use the acronym ROOTS, meaning respect for Rules, Opponents, Officials, Teammates and Self.

You don't bend the Rules to win. You understand that a worthy Opponent helps you to play to your highest potential. You respect Officials even when you disagree with their calls. You refuse to do anything that embarrasses your Teammates. Even if others fail to live up to these standards, you live up to the standards you set for your Self. Here are a few ways “Second-Goal” Parents can contribute to a positive high school sports environment so that the focus falls where it should: on the student-athletes.

Before the Game:

1. Make a commitment to Honor the Game in action and language no matter what others may do.
2. Tell your players before each game that you are proud of them regardless of how well they play.

During the Game:

1. Fill your student-athlete's "Emotional Tank."
2. Don't yell instructions during the game. Let coaches coach.
3. Cheer good plays by both teams.
4. Mention good calls by the officials to other parents.
5. If an official makes a "bad" call against your team, Honor the Game -- be silent!
6. If other parents yell at the officials, gently remind them to Honor the Game.
7. Don't do anything in the heat of the moment that you will regret after the game. Ask yourself, "Will this embarrass my student-athlete or the team?"
8. Remember to have fun! Enjoy the game.

After the Game:

1. Thank officials for doing a difficult job.
2. Thank the coaches for their commitment and effort.
3. Remind your student-athletes again that you are proud of them -- win or lose.

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