

HOW DO BE AN ALL-STAR PARENT

By Rob Gilbert, Ph.D

How do you define an All-Star Parent? Very simply, he or she is a parent who is a good and great fan. To become an all-star parent of an athlete or participant there are times when you must stop parenting. When your son or daughter changes into uniform and becomes an athlete or participant, you also have to change- from a parent to a fan. Your job on the sidelines or in the stands is not to be a parent, but to be your child's greatest fan.

There's no trick to learn here. You already know how to do this. Remember how you behaved when your baby was learning to walk? You were a fan and supporter, weren't you? You applauded the "downs" as well as the "ups".

You never said things like, "what's taking you so long?" "How come the kid down the street is walking better than you?" "Why do you keep making the same mistakes over and over again?" You were the world's most appreciative audience.

Why should it be any different now that your child is involved in activities? Your job is not to be the coach or the expert. You are there so you can share the thrill of victory or the agony of defeat- together.

In fact, your child needs your support more in defeat than in victory. Did you ever notice that strangers feel free to come out of the stands and congratulate the winners? But in defeat, sometimes the athlete's own teammates and coaches ignore him/her. As a parent you have to be there to cushion setbacks with a positive "We'll get them next time."

The three B's for all-star parents:

1. Be there
2. Be positive
3. Be seated

BE THERE- You can never hope to be an all-star parent unless you show up at the events. Regardless of the skill level of your child or the success of the team- go to the events. Be supportive. Don't be a fickle fair weather fan.

BE POSITIVE- On the sideline, if you cannot say something positive, don't say anything at all. Nothing good comes from negative statements and nothing negative comes from positive ones. If you cannot be positive at least be silent.

BE SEATED- Even though it is good to be positive, it is not good to overdo it. Don't stick out. Be an admirer- not a cheerleader. Players should not confuse your voice with the public address system.

Once you start to become a positive, acknowledging fan, an interesting thing may happen. Your child will want you at the activity. When this happens, you will know that you are considered to be an important member or your child's personal all-star support team.