

JUNIOR & ESPOIR CYCLING

*A PARENT HANDBOOK FOR
GUIDING & SUPPORTING
YOUNG ATHLETES*



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MOUNTAINS,
MARATHONS & MORE

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THE SPORT PARENT PLEDGE

As the proud parent of a young athlete I pledge:

- To seek out qualified coaches who are focused on healthy growth and development and who understand the demands of being a young athlete.
- To love and support my athlete unconditionally.
- To encourage, reward, and practice good sportsmanship.
- To let my athlete's interests, not mine, lead the way.
- To provide a positive parent push that is focused on my athlete's needs rather than my own.
- To honor the Young Athlete's Bill of Rights
- To have patience.
- To always be a respectful fan.
- To practice good communication skills with my athlete and with his or her coach.
- To respect my athlete and to encourage all of his or her efforts, not just the outcome.
- To support my athlete's coach through both my words and efforts.
- To remember that this experience belongs to the athlete.



Sign _____

Date _____

Cut this page out and post on your refrigerator or somewhere you will see it often.

The material in this booklet was developed to help enhance the youth sport environment. Please feel free to share this booklet with others. I ask only that you use it in its entirety and that you credit the source. Please feel free to contact me with questions or suggestions for future editions of this material. Thank you

Kristen Dieffenbach



RESOURCES

Positive Coaching Alliance
www.positivecoach.org

Mom's Team
www.momsteam.com

Center for Sport Parenting
www.sportsparenting.org



Institute for the Study of Youth Sports
<http://ed-web3.educ.msu.edu/ysi>

Positive Coaching: Building Character and Self-Esteem Through Sports by Jim Thompson

Why Johnny Hates Sports by Fred Engh

Raising Winners: A Parent's Guide to Helping Kids Succeed
by Shari Kuchenbecker

Good Sports: The Concerned Parents Guide by Rick Wolff

Winners are Made Not Born: How My Parents Made Me a Success by Summer Sanders (Olympic gold medalist in swimming)

Motivated Minds: Raising Children to Love Learning
by Deborah Stipek & Kathy Seal

Talented Teenagers: The Roots of Success and Failure
by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Kevin Rathunde, & Samuel Whalen

Developing Talent in Young People by Benjamin Bloom



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JUNIOR & ESPOIR CYCLING

In an age of alarming rise in negative health statistics and increasingly stressful sedentary lifestyles, the sport of cycling can provide your young athlete with a lifetime of benefits.



Research has shown that involvement in youth sport :

- Develops lifelong fitness benefits
- Develops skill and coordination
- Enhances self esteem
- Fosters friendships and builds social skills
- Teaches teamwork
- Provides a chance to travel and exposure to positive role models
- Reduces involvement in negative behaviors
- Develops coping skills and life skills
- Enhances critical thinking skills

KEEP IN MIND....

In order for a young athlete to benefit from his or her sport experience, it is crucial that they participate in a *safe, supportive, healthy, and development focused* environment.

As the parent of a participant in youth sport, it is **your** job to understand an athlete's needs and to provide the structure and support necessary to make his or her sport experience all it can be.



TIPS FOR TEEN ATHLETE COMMUNICATION

Ok—so the phrase ‘teen communication’ may feel a bit like an oxymoron at times. While the post child pre adult years may not be the easiest to negotiate, good communication techniques can help ease the way.

- ☺ Listen! One of the most empowering things you can do is listen. Listen to what your child has to say.
- ☺ Ask rather than tell. You have raised a smart child. Empower them by letting them share what they know, think and experience.
- ☺ Practice good attention. Avoid multitasking when talking to your athlete. Perceived lack of interest is a sure way to shut down communication.
- ☺ Let your athlete lead - keep in mind that their emotional age may not match their chronological age.
- ☺ Connect through activity. Very few people are comfortable with one-on-one face to face talks. How about riding with your child during the warm up or cool down or on a recovery day?
- ☺ Don't forget to tell your child what you like, what you are proud of, and what was well done.

Of course, as a parent, it will be necessary for you to share criticisms and critiques occasionally.

When providing feedback—

- * First ask yourself “Am I an expert?” or “Am I qualified to give advise in this matter?”
- * Avoid non-teachable moments. Your message will be lost if the timing is wrong.
- * Ask first—allow the athlete a chance to say ‘No, not right now’ or ‘Sure, I’m ready to listen’. Then respect his or her choice!
- * Communicate useful improvement focused information rather than pointing out faults or errors.

SIGNS OF TRAINING RELATED TROUBLE

Despite all of the benefits of sport, structured training and competition do carry certain risks. Knowing what to look for, taking simple precautions, and reacting appropriately can help keep your athlete safe, healthy, and happy.

SOURCES OF TROUBLE

Overtraining—excessive training stress that causes problems that linger for an extended period of time

Underrecovery—inadequate or poorly utilized recovery activities or coping skills

Lack of Balance / Life Stress—sources of stress experienced in other areas of an athlete's life that hinder training and / or competition

THINGS TO LOOK FOR

Loss of appetite	Unexplained weight loss
Mood changes	Unexplained weight gain
Increased injury	Lingering or frequent colds
Irritability	Sleeping more or less
Lingering soreness	Loss of enjoyment

LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES

BURNOUT—loss of enjoyment and performance decline

WITHDRAWAL—loss of enjoyment and leave sport

PREVENTION

- Communicate with the coach frequently
- Keep fun and free time a part of your athlete's environment
- Be aware of athlete's training and other life (e.g. school exams) stressors
- Model and teach good time management, balance, and coping skills whenever possible.



YOUNG ATHLETE'S BILL OF RIGHTS

1. Right to participate in sports.
2. Right to participate at a level commensurate with each child's maturity and ability.
3. Right to have qualified adult leadership.
4. Right to play as a child and not as an adult.
5. Right of children to share in the leadership and decision-making of their sport participation.
6. Right to participate in safe and healthy environments.
7. Right to proper preparation for participation in sports.
8. Right to an equal opportunity to strive for success.
9. Right to be treated with dignity.
10. Right to have fun in sports.

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UNDERSTANDING TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Talents, and we all have them, are developed in 3 stages.

EARLY PHASE

In the early phase individuals are exposed to many things. This helps develop overall physical development. Experiences are fun, playful, offer immediate rewards, and there is praise for effort.

TECHNICAL/DEVELOPMENTAL PHASE

In the middle phase there will be a greater focus on skill learning through more routine practice, a knowledgeable coach will be introduced, and fun continues to be emphasized.

LATE/MATURE PHASE

During the final stage performance is at a higher, often elite, level. Ultimately, enjoyment still matters for continued participation.

KEY TALENT DEVELOPMENT POINTS

- ✓ Movement through the phases is not the same for every-one. Chronological age doesn't matter! Development must be driven by individual interest and emotional maturity.
- ✓ Turning fun into structured serious practice too quickly feels like work. Most kids, no matter how talented, don't enjoy or respond positively to this environment.
- ✓ Emphasis should always be on skill mastery, individual achievement, and personal satisfaction in order to maintain a sense of enjoyment



ULTIMATELY

The number one reason that young people list for participating in a sport? **FUN**

The number one reason young athletes give for quitting? **LOSS of FUN**



YOUR ROLE

Encourage your athlete to set their own goals. Self selected goals are always the most powerful.

Be careful not to let your goals or unfulfilled dreams get mixed in with your child's goals. You can support your child's ambitions but you can not dream his dreams for him.

Praise and reward effort unconditionally.

Make sure your athlete knows that you value them regardless of accomplishments.

If you hire a coach, let him do his job. Adding your two cents on strategies and training theories can confuse your athlete and reduces the coaches ability to be effective.

Show your love and pride verbally and nonverbally.

Provide a *Positive Parent Push* when necessary. This is an occasional nudge, reminder, or skill development effort to help an athlete get through a lapse in motivation or to handle a tough spot.

Your young athlete will experience many distractions and stressors before and during competing—don't be one of them!

Be a role model by having a positive attitude, focusing on skill mastery, enjoying life, and good sportsmanship.

If you coach your own child—proceed with caution. It can be difficult for a young person to separate out the unconditional parental love from a coaching parent.



Above all, remember that this experience belongs to the athlete. As a parent, your job is to facilitate this endeavor. If you are seeking cycling glory then you should set your sites on and work for your own master's title.

THE COACH

What to Look For in A Coach

- Appropriate credentials (USAC, First Aid, CPR, etc.).
- Knowledgeable about the developmental, physiological, and nutritional needs of young athletes.
- A well defined philosophy that you believe in as well.
- Emphasizes development and sportsmanship.
- Views your child as an individual not just as an athlete.
- Treats athletes with dignity and respect.
- Treats parents with dignity and respect.
- Teaches dignity and respect.
- Has well established guidelines and rules.
- Individualizes training.

What to watch for?

- ✓ Abusive coaching—physical or emotional.
- ✓ Unrealistic expectations.
- ✓ Lack of structure.
- ✓ Lack of appropriate teacher/learner or age appropriate boundaries.
- ✓ Lack of individualization.
- ✓ Overemphasis on winning over effort and learning.
- ✓ Poor sportsmanship.
- ✓ A sudden change in young athlete's enjoyment or interest in training with his or her coach.

Making the most of the coach/parent relationship

- * Recognize and respect the commitment your child's coach has made to the sport and to your child.
- * Communicate frequently with the coach.
- * Observe practice (but don't interfere!) whenever possible—especially with younger children.
- * If you disagree with the coach, don't put your child in the middle. Deal with the coach privately and in a professional manner.
- * Support and reinforce the coach to enhance what your child learns.



WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE ELITE?



Many parents (and young athletes) dream of national titles and Olympic glory. Everyone wants to know “How do we create top notch athletes?”

Leading sport science researchers, elite level athletes, and top notch coaches agree that maximizing talent and competing at an elite level takes.....

1. Skill
2. Years of organized structured training
3. Unconditional support
4. Motivation
5. Dedication
6. An optimistic mindset
7. Good genetics
8. Luck
9. Luck
- and 10. *MORE LUCK!!!!*

For every elite athlete, there are dozens of talented individuals who chose to follow other paths, succumb to injury, or find that life gets in the way.

In fact, less than 1/10th of 1% of all individuals who participate in youth sports will go on to play professional sports or to play in college!!!

SO, by creating a healthy sport environment you are providing your child with opportunities and skills they need to become elite.

And what if they never reach that level? — no matter, in a positive environment your athlete will

- ◆ Experience an incredible journey!
- ◆ Learn valuable life and coping skills that will help them excel anywhere!
- ◆ Have fond memories and a love of sport and exercise!

AGING UP CONCERNS

Moving up from one junior age group to another or from one category to the next can be exciting. But for some athletes, a new level of competition can be an anxious and even terrifying situation. Even for athletes who are excited about the new challenges, competing in a new category can be nerve-wracking.

How the transition is perceived will impact:

- * Enjoyment
- * Self confidence
- * Effort
- * and Performance

If an upgrade is optional consider the athlete's physical, emotional, and chronological levels of readiness. Often abilities don't develop at the same pace in all categories. Just because the athlete is physically able to handle more serious competition, doesn't mean that they are emotionally equipped to cope with the new challenges and frustrations it will present.

How to Avoid the Potential Perils and Pitfalls

- .Always rewarding effort and learning, rather than just outcome.
- .Emphasize work ethic and patience.
- .Prepare your athlete regarding what to expect at new levels of competition.
- .Provide unconditional love and support.
- .Tell and show your athlete that you value and love them for who they are—not what they accomplish.
- .Help your athlete find ways to enjoy their sport no matter what level or ability they compete at.
- .Look for a coach and a program that emphasized individual development and long term growth over quick glory.



BENEFITS OF COLLEGIATE CYCLING

Collegiate Cycling is an association of 280 competitive college and university bike racing teams from around the country, organized under USA Cycling. Collegiate Cycling regional racing functions under 10 different conferences, which qualify student athletes for national championships in road, mountain bike and track disciplines. Collegiate bike racing:

- Promotes the continued health and fitness benefits of being a cyclist.
- Provides a support network of peers and coaches who will help and encourage your athlete.
- Encourages healthy behaviors, such as good nutrition, that are vital for good health and peak athletic performance.
- Enhances time management skills.
- Provides the support and skills necessary for good grades and academic achievement.
- Provides positive structure and responsibility.
- Increases study incentives, as poor grades often mean loss of eligibility
- Provides great alumni connections
- May provide scholarship opportunities

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR A COLLEGIATE CYCLING TEAM?

Anyone interested in participating in a fast-growing segment of collegiate athletics! Collegiate competition ranges from beginner friendly starter races to very competitive racing for national titles. If your chosen school does not currently have a team, your junior athlete may want to start a new team. Many junior athletes have become excellent team leaders and developed nationally competitive clubs from scratch.

WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

Check out the Collegiate Cycling section of the USA Cycling website (www.usacycling.org/ncca2/) for more information on collegiate racing and for links to the regional organizations.

Also, take a look at BikeRide.com's collection of links to college cycling programs at www.bikeride.com/links/collegiate.asp