

Grandparenting an Athlete



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It has been an exciting school year. The younger granddaughters are learning gymnastics as they advance in their ballet classes and performances. Our middle school grandson has completed a full season of cross country. Our passionate middle school granddaughter juggles a full schedule of select soccer and volleyball. And our older grandchild loves to sail and snow ski. Our greatest challenge is to be fully present for each grandchild as we watch them compete and follow their passions. Each has their individualized preferences for how we are present for their various activities. All request various levels of encouragement. Some love us to cheer loudly while others want us to observe quietly. The older grandkids accommodate our support while the younger grandkids want our full-time participation at all events. Thankfully, we are the grandparents. Our only job is to support each grandchild with their preferred level of support and drive them to an event

when requested.

Organizing the Sports/Activity Calendar

At the beginning of the school year, I contact each grandchild and ask them how much they want us involved in the sport and activity schedule. The younger they are, the more they want our attention. Once they express their wishes, I organize our activity attendance schedule. The twins love to show me their recent new dance and gymnastics steps at home. We are only required to drive them to class sometimes and are committed to attending formal performances twice a year. The middle school grandson's schedule conflicted with the twins' dance schedule. We volunteered to manage driving for the grandson's Tuesday schedule while the parents and a babysitter shared driving for the twins' schedule. I loved watching all cross country meets with our middle school grandson because he was passionate and excited about this new sport. We were encouraged to take photos at all events and share with our extended family. What a wonderful achievement! The older grandkids loved to have us attend many activities until middle school. Once in middle school we distanced ourselves as friends are very important and carpools are wonderful.

Cheering for a Grandchild Athlete

Next, we learned how to cheer for each child at their specific event. The ballet recitals were very disciplined so we quietly enjoyed the performances and awarded each twin with flowers after their performance

when we all posed for family photos. The middle school cross country grandson loved having us cheer for him and his team. The coach encouraged outstanding teambuilding cheering for all athletes participating in the race. We took photos at each event and circulated them to family members. The older grandkids thanked us for coming and focused on their sport with their teammates. We were encouraged to cheer holistically for the team and remain calm and quiet.

What I Have Learned from the Coaches

The following are guidelines I have learned from coaches after years of team participation as an athlete, parent, and now a grandparent:

- Be present for the entire team.
- Listen to the coach and follow the rules.
- Reinforce the coach's rules with your athlete.
- Cheer for the entire group of participants.
- Don't coach your athlete or the team from the observation areas.
- Be positive at all times.
- Don't distract with unnecessary chatter.
- Bring snacks that nourish your athlete and the team.
- Offer support or help when requested from the coach.
- Model positive sportsmanship for all attendees at a sporting event.

When I consider the value of team sports, I am thankful that all our grandkids value their experiences in their selected sports and team activities. This participation

overcomes isolation and encourages lifetime friendships. It helps our grandchildren learn how to effectively work with teams at home, school, and eventually in their jobs and careers.

Share your experiences as a parent or grandparent supporting your athletes in the comments section below this blog.