

Starlings

VOLLEYBALL, USA

PARENT/PLAYER HANDBOOK

VERSION 2022-2023

PARENT/PLAYER HANDBOOK

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ABOUT STARLINGS VOLLEYBALL, USA

Starlings Mission

The mission of Starlings Volleyball, USA is to positively impact the lives of at-risk youth through the sport of volleyball.

Starlings Vision

The Vision for Starlings Volleyball, USA is to provide girls with equal access to quality volleyball programs, regardless of financial hardship or skill level through exposure to training and participation in the sport of volleyball, while using the platform of the sport to empower within each player, academic excellence, healthy lifestyle choices and excellent character.

The History of Starlings

It began with a single inner-city club in 1996. Today, Starlings is the nation's largest junior volleyball club with teams in more than 70 cities and Native American reservations throughout the U.S. Approximately 3,500 girls currently participate in the program.

Starlings is the passion of Byron Shewman, a former USA Men's Volleyball Team member, who sought to establish a volleyball/academic program that would largely serve girls from lower socioeconomic groups. Olympian Kim Oden joined Shewman to start the first club in San Diego, California in 1996.

By July of 1998, 24 Starlings teams from across the country participated in the first annual Starlings National Championship in Dallas, Texas, as part of USA Volleyball's Junior National Championship. The competition, now located in Anaheim, CA, currently draws more than 1300 participants. Just over two decades since its inception, Starlings Volleyball, USA has brought club volleyball and support to the lives of over 50,000 disadvantaged girls.

PRACTICES

Practice Schedule: Starlings teams typically practice two times per week. Coaches will sometimes schedule additional practices in preparation for tournaments.

Practice Rules: Our focus with practice is to build team unity, increase their base knowledge of tactical volleyball skills and adequately prepare the team for competition. To achieve that, certain rules are required by all teams as detailed below:

- Every practice is important. It is expected that each player will exercise good time management skills so that scheduling conflicts are kept to a minimum.
- All athletes are expected to make every effort to attend practice. If a player must miss a practice, a telephone call or message through SportsEngine to their head coach is expected at least 4 hours before practice. Only after attempting and failing to reach your head coach can a player contact a teammate to relay the message to the head coach. Advanced notice is expected if the missed practice is due to vacation, school function or another event scheduled in advance. Missing practice may result in loss of playing time.

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Missing Practice: Injured athletes who can attend school are expected to attend practice to support their team and be available to help where they can, even if they cannot physically participate in practice. Players who are sick, have a fever, or stomach flu (diarrhea and/or vomiting) should not come to practice.

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Parents Attending Practices: All practices are open and parents are welcome to observe practices at any time. Parents may not coach or offer instruction to their daughter or another team member at any time during practice. Parents are not permitted on the court. Excessive unexcused absences may result in expulsion from Starlings without being eligible for future return.

TOURNAMENTS

Parent Guidelines: Parents are responsible for organizing the transportation of their daughter to and from tournaments. Starlings recommends that athletes do not drive themselves to and from tournaments. Car-pooling can be arranged with other teammates and is encouraged. We strongly recommend that players get a nutritious meal and have a 10:00 PM curfew the night before a tournament.

Player Rules:

- If a player knows that she will miss a tournament, be late or have to leave early from a tournament it is her and her parent's responsibility to notify the coach as soon as a conflict is identified.
- All athletes are required to be in the gym, ready to warm-up, at the scheduled start time set up by their head coach. Usually this will be when the gym opens, or one hour prior to the start of the first match.
- Players are expected to avoid displaying negative emotions during matches. Arguing with the officials, coaches or other participants will not be tolerated.
- All athletes are required to stay at the tournament until the team has been released by one of the coaches. We play as a team, and we will leave the event as a team.
- Players are to be responsible for their own water during the match. Parents may not approach the bench to refill or bring water after the match has started.

Officiating:

All tournaments are at least partially self-officiated. Officiating at tournaments is the shared responsibility of the entire team, including coaches. All players are required to help with the line judging, score keeping, and score flipping.

- The coach may rotate officiating responsibilities but will often only use the most experienced scorekeepers.
- No headsets or cell phones are to be used during officiating assignments. This also includes cell phones at the scorekeeper's table.

PLAYING TIME

At Starlings we want every player to able to compete on the court and fulfill her competitive goals. Our coaching guidelines are designed to give Starlings athletes the best opportunities to improve and develop as athletes and young women. It is our goal that all players have some on-court role every match. There may be exceptions with players recovering from injuries, or who've had problems with adherence to team rules/policies.

Playing time can be determined by a number of factors.

- A player's practice attendance
- A player's ability to perform at the necessary level for a skill or position
- A players past performance during the tournament or the last week of practice
- A player's effort and work ethic
- The needs of the team in the present as well as later in the season.
- Playing time will vary by position with some positions playing all the way around the court and some playing only front row or back row.·

All playing time is decided by the coaches and is not negotiable. Coaches have the right to play whomever they think is best suited for a position and who helps contribute to the team's development and success. Any issues with playing time must be handled in accordance with our club communication policies (see next section).

TEAM COMMUNICATION

PLAYER TO PLAYER

It is our expectation that if a conflict arises between players on a team then it gets resolved outside of practice/tournaments time, if possible, so as to minimize the effect that it can have on the chemistry of the team. If the conflict is not reconcilable then it is our expectation that the players involved should not aggravate the problem by involving other players or parents on the team with gossip, rumors or by attacking people on Facebook or other social media. If conflict between two players becomes an issue on the court, the coach may set up a meeting with both players and their families.

TEAM COMMUNICATION

PLAYER TO COACH

Good communication is necessary between the coach and player. Both players and coaches are responsible for establishing a relationship of trust and mutual respect. Bringing up a problem can be very difficult for a player but this is one of those life skills that sports can teach. Parents may need to push their daughter to take the first step. Starlings coaches work to be approachable and to create a safe environment for player to bring up concerns.

For players, the most common concern that they have revolves around playing time. Players who are not satisfied with their coach's decisions must engage with the coach to identify the issue by following these steps:

- ***The athlete must first approach the coach and initiate dialogue. Not the parent.***
  - Our expectation is that the player should start this conversation by asking what she needs to do to play more and how she can work towards playing a larger role in contributing to the team's success.
  - Often times, players are unclear on what they need to change or how playing time is determined and an early conversation can address these questions.
- ***If the question or problem is still unanswered or unresolved the athlete must again approach the coach for clarification and direction.***
- ***If the question or problem is still unanswered or unresolved, the athlete can request a player coach meeting with parents and a club administrator in attendance.***

We think the ability to confront and discuss potentially emotional topics is an absolutely necessary skill for negotiating conflict within one's life. HOWEVER, we do realize there are times a problem needs to be addressed and the player cannot bring herself to approach the coach. In this case, we HIGHLY encourage the parents, in a spirit of collaboration with the coach, to produce the best environment for the player, to bring the issue to the Club Director's attention. If you, as a parent, have legitimate concerns about a coach other than your athlete's coach, or with an athlete other than your own, you need to address the Club Director.

TEAM COMMUNICATION

PARENTS TO ADMINISTRATION

Starlings wants to encourage appropriate communication between our parents and the coaching staff of their daughter's team. What is appropriate communication? Who should I communicate to, the coach or the director?

Any information about your daughter's health.

- Recent illnesses, medical restrictions relative to practice, allergies, medication needs are all examples of important information that we want you to communicate to your coaches and/or Starlings administration.

Any information about your daughter's emotional health

- It may be important for your coach to know if your daughter is struggling in school, had a recent death in the family, or is dealing with another emotionally charged issue. Without this context, your daughter's behavior in practice or during a tournament may be interpreted as being lazy, unfocused, or even disrespectful.

A "head's up" that your daughter is struggling to communicate with her coach

- This is appropriate if it is only a quick head's up and not a detailed email. Remember that we begin this conversation with the player first (see page 5). This should be communicated to the Director so that an extra pair of eyes can be alerted to the team. The Director will communicate your concerns to the coach.

Your positive experiences with the coach or team

- If we are doing things right, then reinforce that by letting us know

Your willingness to be more involved

- If you want to help with pictures, video, fundraising or other activities to support your team and the club, then let us know!

Grievance Policies

- Competitive team athletics, by its very nature, creates situations where everyone may not be happy all the time. For the psychological health of the athletes and the club as a whole, grievances need to be handled between the parties involved and the decision-makers in the situation, meaning, talk to the coach (when appropriate) or talk to the administration.

PARENTS TO ADMINISTRATION (cont.)

There are topics of communication with your daughter's coaches which are not appropriate or where there is a more appropriate venue to make that contact:

Conversations about playing time:

- If your daughter is receiving playing time consistent with this handbook and the expectations set forth by your coach at the player/parent meeting at the beginning of the season, and your daughter has not tried to discuss her playing time or her role on the team with her coach, it is inappropriate for you to do so. (see page 5)
- Before approaching the coach yourself, encourage your daughter to talk to her coach using the steps outlined in our "Players to Coaches" section of team communication.
- If after this conversation, there are still concerns, a conversation with the coach, parent, and player may be appropriate. Request a meeting with the Club Director to facilitate this process.

Other players on the team:

- Your personal opinions of other player's attitudes, skill, performance, or conduct are not appropriate topics of conversation for you to have with your daughter's coach.
- There are some exceptions... Any issues relative to drugs, alcohol, or weapons should be brought up with Starlings administration immediately.

Coaching technique, tactics, systems, etc.

- These are all issues that are not open for discussion or negotiation. There are opportunities at the end of the season for parents to provide feedback on these topics to the coaching staff and the Club Director.

FINDING THE BEST TIME TO TALK

Little problems are easier to fix than big ones, and little problems have a way of getting bigger when not addressed. Here are some guidelines for finding the best time to talk

- If there is a question about playing time, don't wait half the season to bring it up.
- The 48 hour rule is good because it WORKS! If there is any emotion to an issue then wait at least 48 hours after the issue before setting up a meeting.
- Prep your coach for the meeting, but avoid lengthy emails or phone messages. These tend to be too emotional and accusatory, so avoid that with a brief note or conversation.

STARLINGS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Each year, Starlings of all ages from all over the country flock to Southern California to get to know their fellow Starlings and to test their skills against each other in our own Starlings National Championships.

OPENING CEREMONIES

The night before tournament play begins, all teams participating in the National Championships are encouraged to attend this exciting pre-tournament event. This is an evening of celebrations where teams dress up and dance, awards are presented to contest winners and standout Starlings, and surprises await!

TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

Three days of play!

Tournament play begins Friday morning and runs through the weekend. The first two days follow a "pool play" format, and the final day is bracket play.

12 and Under competes Saturday and Sunday only

WHAT TEAMS GO TO NATIONALS?

Teams can decide early in their season if they'd like to participate in that year's Nationals. It's open for ALL Starlings teams and players of every skill level.

FUNDRAISING

If a team decides they'd like to participate, the coach, parents, and players will work together to raise funds for travel expenses and plan fun activities for the end-of-season celebration. Starlings has special programs designed to help teams raise money for their expenses.

visit ***www.starlings.org/nationals*** for more information about this year's tournament

AWARDS AND CONTESTS

LITERARY/ART CONTEST

The Starlings philosophy is a holistic one: competition is good but sports should also be fun. Finally, an athlete should seek to develop all her talents. For this reason, we encourage ALL Starlings players to submit entries to our annual Literary/Art Contest.

- ABOUT THE CONTEST
  - The Starlings Literary/Art Contest debuted at the 2000 National Championship and has proven to be a highlight of each season since.
  - Once a year, all girls in a Starlings program are invited to submit artistic and literary works on specific themes and in categories that include essays, poetry, painting, drawing, sculpture and photography.
  - The winners are honored each year at the Starlings National Championships Opening Ceremonies.
    - *Prizes include Academic Scholarship Funds, gift cards, and other giveaways.*
- *HOW TO SUBMIT*
  - Visit ***www.starlings.org/literaryartcontest*** for more information about how to submit your piece online. *Contest submissions will be accepted starting March 1st*

STARLINGS SPIRIT AWARD

Every year, Club Directors submit the name of *ONE PLAYER* from their club whose spirit and passion sets her apart, who makes the Starlings experience more fun for everyone, and who is a model of sportsmanship, leadership, and fellowship. Spirit Award winners are announced at the Starlings National Championships Opening Ceremonies.

PLAYERS FUND

WHAT IS THE PLAYERS FUND?

Starlings is committed to creating an accessible club volleyball experience for any player interested in participating. Starlings has created this program to supplement player fees for those players who may not otherwise be able to participate. Players whose financial hardships may be to great to overcome can apply for support from the Starlings Players Fund by following the steps below.

HOW TO APPLY

- Visit ***www.starlings.org/support***
  - A link to download the application will be located at the top of the page.
  - Download, print, and complete the application.
- Upon completion, turn in your application to your CLUB DIRECTOR.
  - Your Club Director will review and send your application to Starlings for review.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE

- Visit *www.starlings.org/playersfund* to help other Starlings athletes with their fees

STARLINGS WEBSITE

WEBSITE INFORMATION: *www.starlings.org*

Every Starlings Club across the country has it's own special page on our website. You can locate yours on our website under the "Clubs" tab.

CREATE A GUARDIAN ACCOUNT

The Starlings website gives our players and families access to all updates regarding club information, rosters, tournaments, and calendars. In order to benefit from everything the website has to offer, we ask that every guardian become a member of SportsEngine through the Starlings website.

Here's How:

1. Go to **www.starlings.org**
2. In the upper right-hand corner of your screen, click **Sign In.**
3. Under *Welcome*, click **create an account.**
4. Fill out all requested information
    a. **NOTE**: Ensure the information entered belongs to the primary account holder
5. Once complete, click **Sign Up.**

TO VERIFY YOUR SPORTSENGINE ACCOUNT

1. Navigate to your email inbox
2. Open the "*Activation Email*" sent to your email address.
    - *NOTE: If you do not receive this email within 5 minutes, be sure to check your junk/spam folder*
3. Click on the "*Activation Hyperlink*" to verify your account

Lastly, download the SportsEngine app on your mobile device, and await further instructions from your daughter's coach.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Starlings wants to help inspire our athletes both on and off the court. Social Media presence is a priority for Starlings clubs, and there are many ways to participate as members of the Starlings family. Every Starlings Club Affiliate has their own profiles, and we encourage all players and families to follow them.

FOLLOW STARLINGS VOLLEYBALL, USA

TWITTER @StarlingsVBC

INSTAGRAM @starlingsvolleyballusa

FACEBOOK @starlings.org

WHAT HAPPENS ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

- **BOND AS A TEAM**
  - Post team photos for everyone to enjoy, and remember to tag Starlings!
  - Show support of one another off the court, and learn more about each others interests.
  - Reinforce the special bonds that start in the gym.
- **GET INSPIRED**
  - Starlings has special relationships with many inspirational members of the world's volleyball community, and we want to give our players the opportunity to engage with as many of those people as possible...
    - By following us on Social Media, Starlings players will be able to interact with professional athletes, elite level coaches, and other inspirational figures!
- ***CONTESTS***
  - Every now and then, Starlings will have nationwide contests for teams to participate in, and the winners receive special prizes!
  - *Examples include - team videos, impressive action shots, viral tweets, and more..*

Starlings Parent/Guardian Season Contract

1. I will remember that my player participates to have fun and that the game is for her, not me.
2. I will be a positive role model for my player and encourage sportsmanship by showing respect, courtesy and by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, officials and spectators at every game, practice or other sporting event.
3. I will not engage in any kind of unsportsmanlike conduct with any official, coach, player or parent such as booing and taunting; refusing to shake hands; or using profane language or gestures.
4. I will not encourage any behaviors or practices that would endanger the health or well-being of the athletes.
5. I will teach my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility of violence. I will demand that my child treat other players, coaches, officials and spectators with respect regardless of race, creed, color, sex or ability.
6. I will never ridicule or yell at my child or any other participant for making a mistake or losing a competition.
7. I will refrain from coaching my child or other players during games and practices, unless I am one of the official coaches of the team.
8. I will inform the coach of any physical disability or ailment that may affect the safety of my child or the safety of others.
9. I will remain off the playing surface at Starlings Volleyball Club while coaching is in session. This includes practices, clinics and private instruction. Unless instructed by coach. Barring an unforeseen family emergency, if for any reason my player cannot fulfill her commitment to the team tournament schedule, I will give Starlings a 60 day notice prior to the date of competition.
10. I will never threaten or assault any staff member of Starlings Volleyball Club.
11. I will never question, discuss or confront coaches about any coaching decisions and will use the proper procedure to speak with coaches at an agreed upon time and place.
    a. Parent Meeting Procedure:
        i. If there is a question regarding playing time, match play or practice decisions, the athlete must first approach the coach and initiate dialogue.
        ii. If the question or problem is still unanswered or unresolved the athlete must again approach the coach for clarification and direction.
        iii. If the question or problem is still unanswered or unresolved the athlete can request a player-coach meeting with parents and a club administrator in attendance.
12. I agree that failure to abide by any of the aforementioned rules and guidelines, I will be subject to disciplinary action that could include, but is not limited to the following: 30 day parental suspension from all Starlings Volleyball Club activities. Parental season suspension. Player and parent non-refunded removal from Starlings Volleyball Club.

Parent/Guardian Signature_____ Print Name_____ Date_____

Parent/Guardian 2 Signature_____ Print Name_____ Date_____

Player Name _____ Team_____

PLAYER CONTRACT

Starlings Volleyball Club Player Contract

1. I will act with respect toward all those I come into contact with through sport.
2. I will refrain from comments or behaviors that are abusive, offensive, racist, sexist or otherwise belittling or demeaning to others.
3. I will not harass or tolerate harassment by others.
4. I will respect others as persons and treat them with dignity.
5. I will respect the privacy of others.
6. I will not endanger the safety of others through my actions.
7. I will wear proper volleyball attire to practice.
    a. No tank tops.
    b. No midriffs.
    c. Hair up and out of your face.
    d. Court appropriate shoes.
8. I will not use profanity during any team function.
9. I will carry my own volleyball equipment and belongings to and from practice and matches.
10. I will come to matches and practice prepared with my own water.
    a. I understand that my parents are not allowed to bring me water during practice or matches.
11. I will turn my cell phone off, or keep it in my backpack, during practice, at tournaments and team functions.
12. I understand that it is my own responsibility to call my coach if am running late or will be absent from practice.
13. I will abide by my coach's absence policy set forth at the beginning of the season.
14. I understand that any use of illegal drugs or alcohol will result in my immediate expulsion from Starlings Volleyball Club.
15. Grievance Procedure:
    a. If there is a question regarding playing time, match play or practice decisions, I will first approach the coach and initiate dialogue.
    b. If the question or problem is still unanswered or unresolved I will again approach the coach for clarification and direction.
    c. If the question or problem is still unanswered or unresolved I can request a player-coach meeting with my parents and a club administrator.
16. By signing below, I agree that by failure to abide by any of the aforementioned rules and guidelines, I will be subject to disciplinary action that my coach or Starlings administration deems necessary.

Player Signature_____ Print Name_____Date_____

What Makes A Nightmare Sports Parent - And What Makes A Great One

Wednesday, February 15, 2012 8:20 pm Written by: Steve Henson

Hundreds of college athletes were asked to think back: "What is your worst memory from playing youth and high school sports? "Their overwhelming response: ***"The ride home from games with my parents."***

The informal survey lasted three decades, initiated by two former longtime coaches who over time became staunch advocates for the player, for the adolescent, for the child. Bruce E. Brown and Rob Miller of Proactive Coaching LLC are devoted to helping adults avoid becoming a nightmare sports parent, speaking at colleges, high schools and youth leagues to more than a million athletes, coaches and parents in the last 12 years.Those same college athletes were asked what their parents said that made them feel great, that amplified their joy during and after a ballgame. Their overwhelming response:

"I love to watch you play."

There it is, from the mouths of babes who grew up to become college and professional athletes. Whether your child is just beginning T-ball or is a travel-team soccer all-star or survived the cuts for the high school varsity, parents take heed. The vast majority of dads and moms that make rides home from games miserable for their children do so inadvertently. They aren't stereotypical horrendous sports parents, the ones who scream at referees, loudly second-guess coaches or berate their children. They are well-intentioned folks who can't help but initiate conversation about the contest before the sweat has dried on their child's uniform.In the moments after a game, win or lose, kids desire distance. They make a rapid transition from athlete back to child. And they'd prefer if parents transitioned from spectator – or in many instances from coach – back to mom and dad. ASAP.

Brown, a high school and youth coach near Seattle for more than 30 years, says his research shows young athletes especially enjoy having their grandparents watch them perform."Overall, grandparents are more content than parents to simply enjoy watching the child participate," he says. "Kids recognize that."A grandparent is more likely to offer a smile and a hug, say "I love watching you play," and leave it at that. Meanwhile a parent might blurt out ...
“Why did you swing at that high pitch when we talked about laying off it?"
"Stay focused even when you are on the bench.”
"You didn't hustle back to your position on defense.”
"You would have won if the ref would have called that obvious foul.”
"Your coach didn't have the best team on the field when it mattered most.”
And on and on.

Sure, an element of truth might be evident in the remarks. But the young athlete doesn't want to hear it immediately after the game. Not from a parent. Comments that undermine teammates, the coach or even officials run counter to everything the young player is taught. And instructional feedback was likely already mentioned by the coach."Let your child bring the game to you if they want to," Brown says. Brown and Miller, a longtime coach and college administrator, don't consider themselves experts, but instead use their platform to convey to parents what three generations of young athletes have told them."Everything we teach came from me asking players questions," Brown says. "When you have a trusting relationship with kids, you get honest answers. When you listen to young people speak from their heart, they offer a perspective that really resonates."

So what's the takeaway for parents?
Sports is one of few places in a child's life where a parent can say, 'This is your thing,' " Miller says. "Athletics is one of the best ways for young people to take risks and deal with failure because the consequences aren't fatal, they aren't permanent. We're talking about a game. So they usually don't want or need a parent to rescue them when something goes wrong."Once you as a parent are assured the team is a safe environment, release your child to the coach and to the game. That way all successes are theirs, all failures are theirs."And discussion on the ride home can be about a song on the radio or where to stop for a bite to eat. By the time you pull into the driveway, the relationship ought to have transformed from keenly interested spectator and athlete back to parent and child:"We loved watching you play. ... Now, how about that homework?"

FIVE SIGNS OF A NIGHTMARE SPORTS PARENT

Nearly 75 percent of kids who play organized sports quit by age 13. Some find that their skill level hits a plateau and the game is no longer fun. Others simply discover other interests. But too many promising young athletes turn away from sports because their parents become insufferable. Even professional athletes can behave inappropriately when it comes to their children. A lot of kids internally reach the conclusion that if they quit the sport, maybe they'll get their dad or mom back.As a sports parent, this is what you don't want to become. This is what you want to avoid:

- **Overemphasizing sports at the expense of sportsmanship:** The best athletes keep their emotions in check and perform at an even keel, win or lose. Parents demonstrative in showing displeasure during a contest are sending the wrong message. Encouragement is crucial -- especially when things aren't going well on the field.
- **Having different goals than your child:** Brown and Miller suggest jotting down a list of what you want for your child during their sport season. Your son or daughter can do the same. Vastly different lists are a red flag. Kids generally want to have fun, enjoy time with their friends, improve their skills and win. Parents who write down "getting a scholarship" or "making the All-Star team" probably need to adjust their goals. "Athletes say their parents believe their role on the team is larger than what the athlete knows it to be," Miller says.
- **Treating your child differently after a loss than a win:** Almost all parents love their children the same regardless of the outcome of a game. Yet often their behavior conveys something else. "Many young athletes indicate that conversations with their parents after a game somehow make them feel as if their value as a person was tied to playing time or winning," Brown says.
- **Undermining the coach:** Young athletes need a single instructional voice during games. That voice has to be the coach. Kids who listen to their parents yelling instruction from the stands or even glancing at their parents for approval from the field are distracted and can't perform at a peak level. Second-guessing the coach on the ride home is just as insidious.
- **Living your own athletic dream through your child:** A sure sign is the parent taking credit when the child has done well. "We worked on that shot for weeks in the driveway," or "You did it just like I showed you" Another symptom is when the outcome of a game means more to a parent than to the child. If you as a parent are still depressed by a loss when the child is already off playing with friends, remind yourself that it's not your career and you have zero control over the outcome.

FIVE SIGNS OF AN IDEAL SPORTS PARENT

Let's hear it for the parents who do it right. In many respects, Brown and Miller say, it's easier to be an ideal sports parent than a nightmare. "It takes less effort," Miller says. "Sit back and enjoy." Here's what to do:

- **Cheer everybody on the team, not just your child:** Parents should attend as many games as possible and be supportive, yet allow young athletes to find their own solutions. Don't feel the need to come to their rescue at every crisis. Continue to make positive comments even when the team is struggling
- **Model appropriate behavior:** Contrary to the old saying, children do as you do, not as you say. When a parent projects poise, control and confidence, the young athlete is likely to do the same. And when a parent doesn't dwell on a tough loss, the young athlete will be enormously appreciative.
- **Know what is suitable to discuss with the coach:** The mental and physical treatment of your child is absolutely appropriate. So is seeking advice on ways to help your child improve. And if you are concerned about your child's behavior in the team setting, bring that up with the coach. Taboo topics: Playing time, team strategy, and discussing team members other than your child.
- **Know your role:** Everyone at a game is either a player, a coach, an official or a spectator. "It's wise to choose only one of those roles at a time," Brown says. "Some adults have the false impression that by being in a crowd, they become anonymous. People behaving poorly cannot hide." Here's a clue: If your child seems embarrassed by you, clean up your act.
- **Be a good listener and a great encourager**: When your child is ready to talk about a game or has a question about the sport, be all ears. Then provide answers while being mindful of avoiding becoming a nightmare sports parent.

Above all, be positive. Be your child's biggest fan. "Good athletes learn better when they seek their own answers," Brown says.

And, of course, don't be sparing with those magic words: ***"I love watching you play."***