

Rhino Wrestling Parent Packet



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Chapter 1 - About the Rhinos

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Our purpose is to give boys and girls the opportunity to grow as young persons and excel in the sport of wrestling. We accomplish this by recognizing that the reasons kids wrestle include fun, friends, fitness, participation, and skill development.

We focus on the seven fundamentals of wrestling drill basic and advanced techniques to instill confidence and achieve consistency while developing the foundation that produces High School State Champions.

Participants will have the opportunity to learn techniques from beginners to elite.

No prior wrestling experience required! Your wrestler will train with opponents close to their own age and size. The only requirement is a strong desire to succeed, improve, and have fun!

Rhino Wrestling is a feeder program designed to improve Cumberland County Middle and High School wrestling. Our practice location makes it easy to presume that we focus on feeding a specific district. We are unabashed in our pride in the Purple and Gold of the Buccaneers and Pirates. We bleed Purple too! We do not allow our pride to influence our purpose and our love for the sport of wrestling. Our members hail from Hoke, Harnett, Robeson, and Scotland Counties as well as the majority of school districts in Cumberland County. Our vision is that Rhinos go on to wrestle in high school with the goal of becoming high school state champions, productive student athletes, contributors to their communities' success, and winners in life.

CHILD – CENTERED PHILOSOPHY

- Youth sports leaders, parents and coaches put the goals of children – fun, friends, fitness, participation, and skill development – first.
- Parental behavior before, during and after games reflects an understanding of their role as parents and positive supporters – not as unofficial coaches.
- Parental expectations are realistic, and parents focus on their child's total development, rather than focusing primarily on their child's potential to earn a sports scholarship or play professionally.
- Parents understand and support children's motivations to play sports – fun, friends, fitness, participation, and skill development.
- Parents are willing to volunteer, and they do so without expectations of special privileges for their own children.

Chapter 2 – Staff

The Rhino Wrestling Club staff is comprised of men and women who have dedicated their time, energy, and effort to the development of young people through sport. Rhino coaches are double-goal coaches. A win-at-all-cost coach has only one goal – to win. A Positive Coach shares that goal (wants to win) but has a second goal that is even more important – to use the sports experience to help young people learn “life lessons” and positive character traits that will help them be successful throughout their lives.

Rhino coaches honor the game and help Rhino wrestlers honor the game by teaching them. We say that honoring the game goes to the ROOTS of the matter — **R-O-O-T-S**. Each letter in ROOTS stands for an important part of wrestling that we must respect.

The R stands for **Rules**. The first O is for **Opponents**. The next O is for **Officials**. T is for **Teammates**, and the S is for **Self**.

Coach Marty Bartram is the head coach & owner of the Rhino Wrestling Club. Coach Bartram began coaching youth wrestling in 1999 as an assistant coach for the Stuttgart Youth Association in Germany. Coach Bartram’s relationship with the Rhinos began as an assistant coach in 2002. In 2004, Chuck Smith, head coach and founder of the Rhinos, handed Coach Bartram the reins of the organization.

Coach Bartram is a [USA wrestling](#) Bronze Certified Coach and a [Positive Coaching Alliance](#) certified double-goal coach. He is serving his second term as a North Carolina USA Wrestling board Member at Large, and has coached North Carolina elementary national folkstyle dual teams, middle school national folkstyle dual teams, high school national folkstyle dual teams and Schoolboy national Greco-Roman and freestyle national dual teams. Coach Bartram is currently working on a Master of Science in Sports Management.

Coach Bartram’s vision is that the youth wrestlers in the Rhino Wrestling Club go on to wrestle in high school with the goal of becoming high school state champions, productive student athletes, contributors to their communities’ success, and winners in life.

Chapter 3 – Membership

Team Purple members are typically ages 5-11 and are new to the sport of wrestling or are entering into their second through fourth year of wrestling.

Expectation of Team Purple Wrestlers

1. Members of Team Purple practice for three hours a week, two 1.5-hour sessions.
2. Coaches use a games approach to wrestling to supplement instruction on fundamentals.
3. Athletes put forth maximum effort in the practice room; however, coaches recognize that part of the development process is teaching and encourages athletes how to give their best effort and what that means.
4. We expect all Team Purple members to compete at Novice and Rookie events, if they are eligible, and to culminate their season by participating in the North Carolina Elementary State Championships in February.
5. Team Purple members that are entering into their third or fourth year of wrestling compete in one tournament a month to include the North Carolina Elementary State Championships in February. The coaching staff is available to help parents select the tournament most appropriate for their situation.
6. Team members may continue wrestling in April and May when the club focuses on Freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling.
7. Team members are invited to attend free Rhino Optional Conditioning sessions (1 hour twice a week) April through July.

Team Gold members are *typically* ages 6 — 18 and participate in designated practice days and times seven hours a week.

Expectation of Team Gold Wrestlers

1. The focus of this program is preparing athletes to be competitive when they reach high school.
2. We expect maximum effort in the practice room and all outside work out assignments to be completed.
3. We expect a commitment to self-discipline. This includes:
 1. insuring school work and home responsibilities are completed so the athlete can participate in practice and events
 2. behavior towards coaches and teammates
 3. putting forth maximum effort in every drill
4. Athletes commit to attending every practice.
5. Training for these members will have a strong emphasis on competition and will include strength and conditioning exercises.

6. Members compete twice a month. Competitions include both in state and out of state tournaments, state championships, regional championships, and national events.
7. Team members may continue wrestling in April and May when the club focuses on Freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling.
8. Team members are invited to attend free Rhino Optional Conditioning sessions (1 hour twice a week) April through July.
9. Membership includes a subscription to USA Wrestler magazine; the privilege to compete and take advantage of events, camps, clinics, international exchanges, and club programs; discounts on wrestling gear, equipment and apparel; and other national discount programs as they become available. You also have access to the Streaming Video website located on TheMat.com.

Official Adult membership falls into three categories, coaches, pairing officials, and mat officials.

All adult memberships require background investigations. It does not matter if you have a security clearance from the Department of Defense, are a schoolteacher, police officer, or have some other official government security clearance. Everyone has to undergo the same standard as laid out by the national governing body for wrestling, USA Wrestling.

One of the great aspects of becoming a parent member is that if you are not interested in coaching, you can still become involved. Pairing officials (helping run and document competitions) and mat officials (those guys in the stripes) both receive training and may be eligible for compensation for their services.

Children can become coaches, pairing officials, and mat officials too! This is a great way to get the whole family involved. Over the past season the Smith family all participated in wrestling events. For example:

Dad – Coach and Paring Official

Mom – Pairing Official (compensated \$30-\$60 per event, helped pay for gas and post event dinners!)

Daughter – Pairing Official (compensated \$30-\$60 per event, earned shopping \$)

Son 16 years old – Athlete and Mat Official (learned more about the sport and was compensated \$30-\$60 per event, paid his entry fees and put money aside for camp!)

Son 12 years old - Athlete

Chapter 4 – Administration

Communication Our primary method of communication will be through email. Any information disseminated at practice will be disseminated via email as well. We have several subscription lists for various activities. For our Nov-Mar programs you need to be concerned with the [Rhino Wrestling Club Folkstyle Distribution List](#); April and May programs use the following list: [Rhino Wrestling Club Freestyle & Greco Distribution List](#); our complete menu of lists are available by clicking the subscribe button visible on most of our web pages.

Safety We are concerned with your children’s safety on and off the mat. Younger children will not be sent to the bathroom by themselves, we will always send them with a buddy or an adult. We feel responsible for your children from the time you drop them off until the time you pick them up. We must see you pick your children up. We will not send children into the parking lot to be picked up no matter how hold they are, yes this includes middle school aged children. Likewise, we do not want you to drop your children off in the parking lot and let them walk in to practice by themselves.

We require that you sign your children in and out of practice daily. This helps assure your children’s safety, provides you the opportunity to get face-to-face information, and sends a message to your children that you find them important enough to take the time to park the car, walk in with them, sign them in, and wish them a good practice before moving on to other things. This five-minute investment pays back big dividends over time.

Closed Practice We run a closed practice. This means that we prefer that parents and siblings do not stay in the wrestling room during practice. This does not mean that you are not welcome. In fact, we are going to invite you to come and get on the mat at least three times so your children can show you what being a Rhino is all about! See our [schedule](#) for parent participation practices.

We understand your concern for your children and your desire for them to do well. For your child’s first three practices parents may stay in the practice room in order to get a feel for the organization. After that we ask that you cooperate by helping enforce closed practices. We recognize that you may not want to drive home or have a need to run to Starbucks or Wal-Mart so you are welcome to stay in the cafeteria of the school.

Closed practices have several benefits including;

- Coaches do not have to fight for your child’s attention
- Children focus on performing properly and not on impressing Mom and/or Dad
- Children grow from independence
- Efficiently uses the space we have which facilitates a safe practice environment
- *Establishes the premise that the child can do it on their own

This final benefit is very important; wrestling requires one on one competition. The parent is up in the stands cheering for their child not mat side. Allowing your child the opportunity to practice without you there sets the stage for alleviating the natural anxiety (butterflies) that come from competing.

Dues vs. registration fee The one time registration fee covers club expenses and national governing body requirements for your child to wrestle. Dues cover our rent expenses. We must pay the county rent 30 days prior to each month. This is why we collect dues two months at a time. There are no refunds after the first 15 days of paying your initial dues.

Dues are payable at practice or online through PayPal. The link is on our membership page. <http://www.rhinowrestling.org/membership.htm> Please use this link to pay online, do not attempt to access PayPal through another method. Please follow up your electronic payment with an email so we can account for your payment.

Equipment and clothing – Headgear: (Required) \$20 & Up available online or at Dick's Sporting Goods, we recommend online Shoes: (Required) \$25 & Up available online or at Dick's Sporting Goods, we recommend purchasing online. We maintain a small stock of used shoes that are available for use. We ask that you return them when you are done and if you have other wrestling shoes that you no longer need please feel free to donate them.

Singlet: (optional) Singlet, the uniform of a wrestler. You may purchase your own singlet or order one of ours. Minimum order amounts vary. You may use the Club T-shirt and shorts. *If you intend to use your team T-shirt for competition please order it "small" so it fits your wrestler's body tightly.*

Team Gear T-shirts, Shorts, Sweatpants, Hoodies, and singlets will be ordered each season.

It is a common practice for Parents or Guardians to wear team apparel to tournaments.

For this reason interested parents/ guardians may order extras. Generally we need a minimum of 12 to place an order at the screener. We sell all kinds of gear, jackets, hoodies, polo shirts; you name it we can get it. We make every effort to consolidate orders so we can minimize shipping and set up fees. Current order deadlines are located on our schedule.

Membership cards Every wrestler in our club receives a USA Wrestling membership card. This card is mandatory for attendance and participation at competitions and clinics sanctioned by USA wrestling. We may attend events sanctioned by other organizations as well; this may require an additional fee. Parents will receive an electronic and hard copy of their children's membership cards. The club will maintain an electronic and hard copy on file.

Competition Competitions generally occur on Saturdays. Our schedule is set and is available online. Expectations for participation are outlined in the membership descriptions. Cost – *Given as a reference*
Individual tournament Participation: \$10.00 to \$15.00 each

The majority of the tournaments we participate in require online payment and registration. Many will have participation caps. The club will conduct all registration and payments online for all members. Submit payment and weight class information to the club “Tournament Coordinator” by close of Tuesday’s practice for the following weekend’s tournament. This means if your child practices on Mondays and Thursdays you will need to submit cash or check payment on Monday. Do not use PayPal to submit payments. There are no refunds for tournament entry fees. An example week is directly below.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7 December	8 December	9 December	10 December	11 December	12 December	13 December
Team Purple & Team Gold Practice	Team Gold Practice	Team Gold Practice	Team Purple Practice	Team Gold Practice	RoCo Christmas Classic	Rhino Rookie Scrimmage
*drop dead date for team purple members to submit \$5 entry fee for Sunday 13 Dec and \$10 entry fee/weight class if attending Saturday’s event	* drop dead date for team gold members to submit \$10 entry fee and weight class for Saturday’s event.		*last day to change weight class for the weekend			

Chapter 5 - Navigate the web site

We try hard to make our site content easy to get to, but, invariably someone cannot find what they need. Here are some quick links to important places you should visit, bookmark, and be familiar. As a Rhino parent, if you cannot find what you need on our site, give us a call and we will either shoot you a link or walk you through how to find what you are looking for so you can find it next time.

The home page: www.rhinowrestling.org this is the landing page for the casual visitor or someone looking for our tournaments you can see our Facebook and Twitter updates here as well

Email subscription lists <http://www.rhinowrestling.org/mail/mail.cgi>

Schedule/Calendar <http://www.rhinowrestling.org/Schedule/calendar.php> note that the categories are color coded for easy viewing; this is a public calendar accessible by anyone; anyone can submit an event (add your child's birthday!) for approval online

Membership page <http://www.rhinowrestling.org/membership.htm> you should have already figured this one out so pass it on to a potential member

Incentive Program http://www.rhinowrestling.org/Downloads/rhino_incentives.pdf

Team Rhino page http://www.rhinowrestling.org/team_rhino.htm lots of great information for our wrestlers and their families

Partnership page <http://www.rhinowrestling.org/opportunities.htm> and packet http://www.rhinowrestling.org/Downloads/rhino_wrestling_club_partnership_letter.pdf

Forum <http://www.rhinowrestling.org/forum> safe chatting and discussion for kids!

Chapter 6 - What you can expect from us/What we expect from you

A child-centered philosophy in execution is what you should expect from us. Keep in mind that all of our coaches are volunteers. They all have been with the club for differing amounts of time and have a variety of experience levels. We make a concerted effort to bring all staff up to speed on our philosophy and way of coaching. The 2009-2010 season ushers in a new emphasis on developing coaches and ensuring the best environment conducive for meeting our organizational purpose. We expect parents to be parents not coaches. We expect you to support our coaches and be your children's biggest fans.

Our organization is committed to the principles of Positive Coaching Alliance and against a "win-at-all-cost" mentality. PCA calls a Positive Coach a "Double-Goal Coach." A win-at-all-cost coach has only one goal – to win. A Positive Coach shares that goal (wants to win) but has a second goal that is even more important – to use the sports experience to help young people learn "life lessons" and positive character traits that will help them be successful throughout their lives.

Help us promote the three PCA principles, which have the power to "transform youth sports so that sports can transform youth." The three principles, explained below, are:

1) ***Redefining "Winner,"*** 2) ***Filling the Emotional Tank,*** and 3) ***Honoring the Game***

1) REDEFINING "WINNER"

In professional sports (which is entertainment), there is only one goal—to have the most points at the end of a contest. However, in youth sports (which is education), there is a **SECOND GOAL**: to produce young people who will be **WINNERS IN LIFE**. To help our children get the most out of competitive sports, we need to redefine what it means to be a "winner."

Winners are people who:

- *Make maximum effort.*
- *Continue to learn and improve.*
- *Refuse to let mistakes (or fear of making mistakes) stop them.*

This is called a Mastery Orientation. PCA says that the Tree of Mastery is an **ELM** Tree where **ELM** stands for **E**ffort, **L**earning, and rebounding from **M**istakes.

If our athletes keep these things in mind, they will develop habits that will serve them well throughout their lives.

There is an added benefit. Athletes who are coached with a Mastery Orientation tend to have reduced anxiety and increased self-confidence. And when athletes feel less anxiety, they are more likely to have fun playing their sport and to do better!

Here's how you can help:

- 1) Tell your child that it's OK to make a mistake.
- 2) Let your child know you appreciate it when he tries hard even if unsuccessful.
- 3) Ask rather than tell. Try to get your child to talk about her play rather than telling her what you think about it. Ask open-ended questions to get her to talk (e.g., "What was the best part of the game for you?")
- 4) Recognize that Mastery is hard work. Let the coaches criticize your child's play. Tell your child you are proud of him regardless of the outcome of the game.

2) FILLING THE EMOTIONAL TANK

Research shows that the home team wins about 60% of the time because of the emotional support a team receives when it plays in front of its own fans. Like gas tanks in cars, athletes have "Emotional Tanks" that need to be filled to do their best. There will be times when you need to correct and criticize. Research has shown that a "Magic Ratio" of 5:1 (praise to criticism) is ideal. Help us achieve this Magic Ratio with your child.

Here's how you can help:

- 1) Your #1 job is to fill your child's Emotional Tank. Encourage him regardless of what happens in the game.
- 2) Try not to give your child a lot of advice (which after a tough game can seem like criticism, which drains a person's tank). Remember, it's difficult to do well with a low tank. When she makes a mistake, you might say, "Don't worry. Let us get the next one. You can do it." After tough losses, it is often helpful to acknowledge feelings of disappointment. For example, you might say "I can imagine you must be disappointed to have lost."
- 3) Use the "3-Pluses-and-a-Wish" technique. Before you give advice, find three good things about your child's performance.

Phrase the advice as a wish:

- *You really tried hard in the game today (Plus #1).*
- *I also saw you filling your teammate's Emotional Tank after he made a mistake (Plus #2).*
- *And that play you made toward the end of the game shows how much you are improving (Plus #3).*
- *I wish you would not get down on yourself when you make a mistake. If you can't come up with three pluses, don't say the wish because then it may drain his emotional tank rather than fill it.*

4) Remember the Magic Ratio*. Praise your child about 5 times for every time you criticize. If you do, she will be better able to hear your criticism without becoming defensive.

** It is called the Magic Ratio because great things happen when we get close to it with our children.*

3) HONORING THE GAME

Honoring the Game gets to the ROOTS of positive play, where ROOTS stands for respect for **Rules, Opponents, Officials, Teammates**, and one's Self

- **Rules:** We do not bend the rules to win.
- **Opponents:** A worthy opponent is a gift that forces us to play to our highest potential.
- **Officials:** We treat officials with respect even when we disagree.
- **Teammates:** We never do anything that would embarrass our team on or off the field.
- **Self:** We live up to our own standards regardless of what others do.

Here's how you can help:

- 1) Let your child know that you want him to **Honor The Game**. Discuss the meaning of each element of **ROOTS** with your athletes.
- 2) **Be a good role model.** Honor the Game when you attend games. Cheer both teams when good plays are made. If, in your opinion, an officiating mistake is made, be silent! Use this as an opportunity to think about how difficult it is to officiate a game perfectly.
- 3) **Encourage other parents to Honor the Game.**

Want to learn more? Take an online sports parent course at <http://www.positivecoach.org/ParentCourse.aspx>

Chapter 7 Self Assessment Tool for Parents

Take this self-test to see if you are doing all you can to keep your child active in sports and receiving the benefits of sports participation. Use this tool periodically throughout the season to evaluate yourself. You may have 10 years experience as a sports parent, but you are never too experienced to improve!

Do you know your role?

- I realize that there are only four roles in sport – player, coach, official or fan – and I pick one and stick with it.
- I understand that my child is the participant, not me, and my expectations are based on my child's needs, not mine.
- I avoid "coaching" from the stands, and I also avoid criticizing officials, coaches and opposing players.
- I seek to be a positive and encouraging fan, applauding good plays for both teams.
- If I coach my child's team, I seek to model appropriate behavior and sportsmanship.

Do you have it all in perspective?

- I understand that children play sports for fun, fitness, friends, participation and skill development.
- I examine my own reasons for being involved and make sure my child's reasons for playing come before mine.
- I focus on encouraging skill development and fun participation, not on winning.
- I realize that children's work is "play," and I try not to interfere with their experience.
- I am focused on my child's development as a whole person, not on his or her prospects for a sports scholarship or for a professional career playing sports.

Do you model the kind of behavior you'd like to see in your child?

- I let the coaches coach and the officials officiate.
- I avoid criticizing officials, coaches or players – both during the game and after.
- I applaud good plays for both teams.
- I treat coaches, officials, players and other parents with respect.
- I provide only positive encouragement before, during and after the game. If I can't say anything nice, I don't say anything at all.

Do you encourage sports participation for the long term?

- I do all I can to make sports participation fun, particularly since experts advise that most children stop participating when sports are no longer fun for them.
- I am quiet after the game and avoid critiquing or analyzing my child's performance on the way home. I know my child wants to hear me say, "I love watching you play."
- I seek out leagues with trained coaches who focus on the positive aspects of sport, including sportsmanship, fun and skill development.
- I try to make five positive comments for every one critical comment to my child. Experts advise "filling the child's tank" with positive comments to aid in learning.
- I resist efforts to make my child specialize in any particular sport at a young age.

Source: Citizenship Through Sport Alliance. 2006. *Through a Child's Eyes: A Parent's Guide to Improving Youth Sports*. Brochure developed for and with the National Association for Sport and Physical Education and the Youth Sport Coalition – structures in the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

Chapter 8 – Sports Parent Tips and Tools

Empowering Conversations with Your Child

When we think about what makes people friends with each other, a number of things come to mind. For example, our friends like us and enjoy spending time with us, as we enjoy them. And what is it we mostly do when we are together with our friends? Mostly we talk and listen to each other.

Conversations are the glue between people, the essential element in a strong relationship. Relationships wither without communication, and the very best form of communication is the conversation. Many parents fall into the trap of thinking that it is their job to talk and their child's to listen. Actually that's only half-right. It is also our job to listen and the child's job to talk. It's a wonderful thing when a parent and child can really talk to and hear each other.

It is important that parents intentionally seek out conversations about sports with their athletes. Here are some suggestions for how to engage your child in a conversation about sports.

1. **Establish Your Goal—A Conversation Among Equals:** A conversation is something between equals. Kings didn't have conversations with their subjects. They told them what to do. Prepare yourself for a conversation with your child by reminding yourself that sports is her thing, not yours. Remember that you want to support her, to let her know that you are on her side. Your goal is not to give advice on how to become a better athlete. It should be to engage your child in a conversation among equals, one of whom (you!) is on the side of the other (her!).
2. **Adopt a Tell-Me-More Attitude:** Brenda Ueland penned one of the most important essays on relationships ever written, *Tell Me More*: "When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand. Ideas actually begin to grow within us and come to life."

Adopt the attitude that you want your child to tell-you-more ("I really want to hear what you have to say."), and then listen to what he has to say—even if you don't agree with it or like it—and you will begin to tap into what Ueland calls the "little creative fountain" in your child.

"If you are very tired, strained...this little fountain is muddied over and covered with a lot of debris...it is when people really listen to us, with quiet fascinated attention, that the little fountain begins to work again, to accelerate in the most surprising way."

Think of your conversation with your child as an Olympic event with judges. A conversation that rates a 9 or a 10 is one in which the child does more talking and the parent more listening. Set your goal before you start, and go for it.

3. **Listen!** In many instances you may know exactly what your child can do to improve. However, this is a conversation, remember? Your goal is to get your child to talk about her sports experience, **so ask rather than tell**. Save your telling for another time.

4. **Use Open-Ended Questions:** Some questions lend themselves to one-word responses. "How was school today?" "Fine." Your goal is to get your child to talk at length, so ask questions that will tend to elicit longer, more thoughtful responses.
 - "What was the most enjoyable part of today's practice/game?"
 - "What worked well?"
 - "What didn't turn out so well?"
 - "What did you learn that can help you in the future?"
 - "Any thoughts on what you'd like to work on before the next game?"
5. **Also ask about life-lesson and character issues:** "Any thoughts on what you've learned in practice this week that might help you with other parts of your life?" Even if you saw the entire game, the goal is to get your child to talk about the game the way she saw it, not for you to tell her what she could have done better.
6. **Show You Are Listening.** Make it obvious to your child that you are paying attention through use of nonverbal actions such as making eye contact as he talks, nodding your head and making "listening noises" ("uh-huh," "hmmm," "interesting," etc.).

Listening is one of the greatest gifts you can give your child! Ueland again:

"Who are the people, for example, to whom you go for advice? Not to the hard, practical ones who can tell you exactly what to do, but to the listeners; that is, the kindest, least censorious, least bossy people that you know. It is because by pouring out your problem to them, you then know what to do about it yourself."

7. **Let Your Child Set the Terms:** William Pollack, MD, author of *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*, notes that children have different "**emotional schedules**" that determine when they are ready to talk about an experience. Forcing a conversation right after a competition (when there may be a lot of emotion) is often less successful than waiting until the child gives an indication that he is ready to talk. Boys may take longer than girls to talk about an experience, so look for prompts that a child is ready. And conversations don't have to be lengthy to be effective. If your child wants a brief discussion, defer to his wishes. If he feels like every discussion about sports is going to be long, he'll likely begin to avoid them. And don't be afraid of silence. Stick with it and your child will open up to you.
8. **Connect through activity.** Sometimes the best way to spark a conversation is through an activity that your child enjoys. Playing a board game or putting a puzzle together can allow space for a child to volunteer thoughts and feelings about the game and how he performed. This is especially important for boys, who often resist a direct adult-style of conversation.
9. **Enjoy:** The most important reason why you should listen to your child with a tell-me-more attitude: Because then **she will want to talk to you**, and as she (and you) get older, you will find there is no greater gift than a child who enjoys conversations with you.

Coach-Parent Partnership

Research is clear that when parents and teachers work together a child tends to do better in school. There is no reason to think that it is any different in youth sports. The following are some guidelines for how parents can contribute to a Coach/Parent Partnership that can help the athlete have the best possible experience.

1. **Recognize the Commitment the Coach Has Made:** For whatever reason, you have chosen not to help coach the team. The coach has made a commitment that involves many, many hours of preparation beyond the hours spent at practices and games. Recognize his commitment and the fact that he is not doing it because of the pay! Try to remember this whenever something goes awry during the season.
2. **Make Early, Positive Contact with the Coach:** As soon as you know who your child's coach is going to be, contact her to introduce yourself and let her know you want to help your child have the best experience she can have this season. To the extent that you can do so, ask if there is any way you can help. By getting to know the coach early and establishing a positive relationship, it will be much easier to talk with her later if a problem arises.
3. **Fill the Coach's Emotional Tank:** When the coach is doing something you like, let him know about it. Coaching is a difficult job and most coaches only hear from parents when they want to complain about something. This will help fill the coach's emotional tank and contribute to his doing a better job. It also makes it easier to raise problems later when you have shown support for the good things he is doing. And just about every coach does 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 a child's parents complain in front of her about how poorly her math teacher is teaching fractions. How would this impact this student's motivation to work hard to learn fractions? How would it affect her love of mathematics? While this may seem farfetched, when we move away from school to youth sports, it is all too common for parents to share their disapproval of a coach with their children. This puts a young athlete in a bind. Divided loyalties do not make it easy for a child to do her best. Conversely, when parents support a coach, it is that much easier for the child to put her wholehearted effort into learning to play well. If you think your child's coach is not handling a situation well, do not tell that to the player. Rather, seek a meeting with the coach in which you can talk with her about it.
5. **Don't Give Instructions During a Game or Practice:** You are not one of the coaches, so do not give your child instructions about how to play. It can be very confusing for a child to hear someone other than the coach yelling out instructions during a game. As in #4 above, if you have an idea for a tactic, go to the coach and offer it to him. Then let him decide whether he is going to use it or not. If he decides not to use it, let it be. Getting to decide those things is one of the privileges he has earned by making the commitment to coach.
6. **Fill Your Child's Emotional Tank:** Perhaps the most important thing you can do is to be there for your child. Competitive sports are stressful to players and the last thing they need is a critic at home. Be a cheerleader for your child. Focus on the positive things she is doing and leave the

correcting of mistakes to the coach. Let her know you support her without reservation regardless of how well she plays.

7. **Fill the Emotional Tanks of the Entire Team:** Cheer for all of the players on the team. Tell each of them when you see them doing something well.
8. **Encourage Other Parents to Honor the Game:** Don't show disrespect for the other team or the officials. But more than that, encourage other parents to also Honor the Game. If a parent of a player on your team begins to berate the official, gently say to them, "Hey, that's not Honoring the Game. That's not the way we do things here."

Note: These guidelines are adapted from [Positive Coaching: Building Character and Self-Esteem Through Sports](#) by Jim Thompson, the founder and leader of the Positive Coaching Alliance.

Guidelines for Honoring the Game

The key to preventing adult misbehavior in youth sports is a youth sports culture in which all involved "Honor the Game." Honoring the Game gets to the ROOTS of the matter and involves respect for the Rules, Opponents, Officials, Teammates and one's Self. You don't bend the rules to win. You understand that a worthy opponent is a gift that forces you to play to your highest potential. You show respect for officials even when you disagree. You refuse to do anything that embarrasses your team. You live up to your own standards even if others don't. Here are ways that **parents** can create a positive youth sports culture so that children will have fun and learn positive character traits to last a lifetime.

Before the Game:

1. Make a commitment to Honor the Game in action and language no matter what others may do.
2. Tell your child before each game that you are proud of him or her regardless of how well he or she plays.

During the Game:

1. Fill your children's "Emotional Tank" through praise and positive recognition so they can play their very best.
2. Don't give instructions to your child during the game. Let the coach correct player mistakes.
3. Cheer good plays by both teams (this is advanced behavior!)
4. Mention good calls by the official to other parents.
5. If an official makes a "bad" call against your team? Honor the Game—BE SILENT!
6. If another parent on your team yells at an official? Gently remind him or her 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 child or the team?"
8. Remember to have fun! Enjoy the game.

After the Game:

1. Thank the officials for doing a difficult job for little or no pay.

2. Thank the coaches for their commitment and effort.
3. Don't give advice. Instead ask your child what he or she thought about the game and then LISTEN. Listening fills Emotional Tanks.
4. Tell your child again that you are proud of him or her, whether the team won or lost.