

Coaching Children - My Experience Coaching My Own Child - Page 1

There are many reasons people get involved coaching children: A love for the game; a long playing background; a desire to give something back; or sometimes it's simply that there are no other volunteers. Another reason and probably the most prevalent, is the desire to coach your own children. There are some coaches who want to coach their kids so they can develop them into the next Derek Jeter or Roger Clemens. If that's you, then I'm sorry, but you are doing it for the wrong reason and more than likely it will damage your relationship with your child. Most of us want to spend quality time with our kids doing something that we enjoy and helping a community need. As most parents, we want our children to be successful on the field and in the interaction with their teammates. Our goals for our children aren't any different from the other parents of kids on the team, but there is a difference in the role we play. As a coach we have taken on a different role with our child and that role of coaching children doesn't always fit squarely with our other role of supportive parent.

To Coach or Not to Coach?

Since my two boys started Little League, I have coached one of them each year. Coaching children has been a great experience for me and my kids have been really excited to have their Dad be their coach. In the spring of 2002, I was trying to figure out if I was going to coach my older or younger son. As most parents I was trying to figure out the fairest way to make the decision. It wasn't an easy decision and I was having a difficult time deciding because

both of my kids were lobbying hard that I should coach their team. As it worked out the decision was made for me by my oldest son. A few weeks before the season I took him and a couple of his friends to the field to play catch and hit the ball around a little bit. His friend was worried about the increased competition that year as they were going to be the youngest players in the division. As we hit, I worked with my son's friend and he was a sponge, taking in everything I said and trying it out. It was a lot of fun for me to work with him. Then it was my son's turn to hit. Well, he got up to the plate and took a few swings and didn't connect. Not only didn't he connect, but everything looked off balance. As I tried to work with him on correcting some problems, it became apparent that he didn't want my help. He proceeded to tell me that he had been playing baseball a long time and knew how to hit. I tried to tell him that I understood that he knew how to hit, but even college and professional players have coaches to help them with all aspects of the game. It didn't seem to matter how I stated it, he didn't want my help. I got home and told my wife that the decision was made; I would be coaching my youngest son this year. I didn't tell my oldest son why I had come to that decision, but I was convinced that it would be difficult to have the role of coach when my son didn't want to listen to anything I said. By not coaching him, I thought I had basically solved the problem and this stage **he** was going through would only last a year or two.

Not Coaching Didn't Solve the Problem

I really believe that while not coaching him that season made the season easier, it certainly didn't solve **our** issues. He wanted

to pitch (which he had never done before) and his coach had no experience teaching pitching mechanics. He struggled to get the ball over the plate the first couple of practices. I asked him if he would like to work on it with me. He said he did because he really wanted to pitch. We went out to work on pitching one evening and it was about as successful as the batting practice. He wanted to do it his way whether successful or not. I got frustrated and he got mad. He stomped into the house saying that "I never let him try anything" and "I'm always telling him what to do".

I think it would have been easy for me to blow off those statements as an exaggeration by an 8 year old, but I will never forget that I felt the exact same way towards my Dad when I was young. I won't go into the details here, but that feeling really affected our relationship when I was growing up and as you can imagine it didn't bring us closer together. I got to the point where I wanted to do the opposite of what my Dad said, just because I didn't want to admit that he was right and I was wrong. With my own son, I wasn't sure what to do. The one thing I was sure about; I knew that I didn't want to go down the same path that I did with my Dad.

After some thinking and talking it over with my wife, I made a couple of decisions. The first was to give him some space. The second was to get some advice. I talked the situation over with some close friends and I also went online and purchased a couple of books dealing with youth athletics and started reading. What I learned from all those sources helped me gain a better understanding of why I was having a difficult time with my son.

["Need To Throw Harder?" "3-6 MPH In As Little As 4 Weeks"](#)
["Safe For All Ages" - 90mphclub.com](#)

[RTeamSite.com - Baseball team web sites! Easy to Use! No](#)
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Expectations

The first thing I realized was that my expectations were different from those of my son. I didn't remember what it was like to be a young kid playing baseball. Not that I couldn't remember, I just didn't think that far back. I remembered what it was like to be a high school and college player. I remember how baseball instilled in me a number of values that I believe helped me in school, in life, and in athletics. Dedication; hard work; perseverance; were just a few of the important things that I learned while playing. These are the life skills that I hope my kids will also learn as they grow and I believe athletics provides a great opportunity to learn. The key word there is 'will'. I was getting so involved in trying to help him be successful; I forgot he's only 8. When I look back at myself at 8, hard work wasn't in my vocabulary. I played baseball for the pure joy of it. I didn't work on anything. I played and improved because I played a lot and had a good time. I watched my son the next couple of practices and saw that he wasn't concerned about his swing or his throwing mechanics. He played hard and was mainly concerned about having a good time and playing with his buddies. Baseball was exactly what it was supposed to be for an 8 year old.

As I thought about that, it made me think of how my son and I used to play ball in the backyard all the time. I also realized he hadn't asked me to play in awhile. My inability to take off my coaching hat and just have fun had affected more than just me

trying to coach him, it also affected our ability to just have fun together.

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