

How to support your child's non-selection - as a parent

SOUTH WEST SYDNEY ACADEMY OF SPORT

One of the hardest things to see as a sporting parent is when your child is struggling, or they do not achieve what they aspire to.

One of the most common times for this is when our child is not selected either for a particular game, or in a representative team, after going through a trialling and selection process.

The initial feeling as a sporting parent is one of hurt, often we feel that we have to go on the offensive either criticising the process, the people selecting the team, or those involved with the coaching.

Hopefully, most of us keep these feelings to ourselves however difficult that may be, but if we are not careful we can often forget the most important person in this experience and that is our child.

If we are proactive as a sports parent and create a positive environment at home, we can try to be balanced in our view and try to prepare our child for all possible outcomes.

One thing that we certainly must be emphasising on a regular basis, is that only through hard work and a great attitude to training, can our child be expected to even be considered for selection.



We are by no means saying that you should be negative, or too pessimistic - but we must strike a balance between this and unrealistic optimism.

It shows how difficult it can be as a parent. If you go too far one way you run the risk of discouraging your child, if you are pessimistic, or if you are at the other end of the scale - the disappointment after all the expectation, can be even harder to take.

This seems like common sense, but it is amazing how many parents find themselves, at either end of this scale.

If your child is not selected, you need to understand how they will be feeling. They are bound to take it personally, it is an attack on their self-esteem and none of us like to feel rejected.

It can be made even harder by the fact that your child will probably have to watch some of their friends go off and participate and will feel that they are missing out from a social perspective as well.

So as a sporting parent - what can you do to manage this?

Here are a few useful pointers.

Don't Overreact: When emotions run high, it is very easy to make poor decisions that we may regret later. Allow some time to cool off, reflect before acting. One thing is for certain make sure you praise your child and tell them how proud you are of them for giving it a go.

Offer huge emotional support: Let your child talk. Let them express their feelings, let them express anger and frustration at how it all went. Even if you disagree with what they may say, listen to it from their perspective, this will be useful to you moving forward.

Certainly, do not squash your child at this stage, it is really important as parents that we do not play it all down and tell them for example 'that it's only a game' or 'there is always next time'.

Let them talk; sometimes silence or even telling them that you feel their pain with, them can act as a huge support.

Encourage and don't create an excuse for them: Be positive and encourage your child.

Try not to make excuses for your child. Instead talk to them about the selection process, ask them questions that allow them to reflect on what they think. Who are the best players? Who do you think you are better than and what might you do next time?

Speak to the coach: If you are totally disillusioned with the decision then after at least 48 hours consider speaking with your child's coach. It would be even better if you could get your child to go and ask for some feedback on what they could maybe do next time to break into the team?

This chat needs to be 'non- confrontational' and should only be used as an avenue to plan a route forward.

Plan ahead: Help your child plan their next stage? What can you do to help support your child? Do they want to continue to fight for their place in the team? If so how

can you best support them using the information that they your child and their coach has given you?

Play lots of sports: One thing that missed selection often highlights, is the need to make sure that your child is involved in a myriad of different sporting, or other activities.

If you only play one sport and this selection process is the 'be all and end all' either at the weekend, or as part of a representative process; then it can be all the more difficult for your child to take or even be motivated to continue.

If they are involved in lots of sports, different teams, or activities, any type of disappointment like this can be kept in a far greater context.

Athlete development: One final thing to be aware of is, that many 'young athlete' early selection processes around the world, are heavily in favour of the more physically and emotionally developed athlete. Many of these athletes being born in the early part of the sporting calendar year.

In making long term decisions and trying to keep things in perspective, recognise that non-selection is something most children will go through, in some way, or another.

It does not mean that further down the line they will not be selected ahead of some of their peers, so keep encouraging and definitely keep motivating them.