

Behaviors of Successful Soccer Parents

February 5, 2019 | Zac Ludwig, CEO

There is a relatively famous picture of Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez sitting back, relaxing, and watching their kids play soccer. You can see the image below:



The caption accompanying this image is often something like "Here are two of the best players in the world not getting overly involved while their kids are playing soccer. If they can relax while watching their kids play soccer, even though they have the highest standards in the world, why can't we?"

One thing that opponents to this idea often point out about why this is different than the rest of our environments is that their kids are playing for the youth team of Barcelona FC and super-knowledgeable and competent coaches at one of the best clubs in the world.

It is true that we don't know the full context behind this picture. We don't know the full situation as to what is happening day-to-day while their kids are growing up and playing soccer; however, I have heard it confirmed by someone in the area that they are there every week, just as relaxed and seemingly carefree as they are in that picture.

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again that, in general, parents who have played at higher levels seem to be the most relaxed and seemingly care-free of all youth soccer parents.

Having spoken to, or heard speak, a number of these parents, there seems to be a theme that they understand something that maybe many other parents don't. Although they care just as much about their children, and although they have the same aspirations for their children as every other parent, they seem to have this understanding that the best way to help support their child is to let their kids have fun and not worry too much in the moment while their child is playing.

As Bruce Brown, founder of *Proactive Coaching* says, parents need to "release their child to the game."

These parents display this by allowing the playing of soccer to be solely their child's experience. They don't verbally or physically intervene, and they don't try to influence their child while going through the learning process of playing soccer, because at the end of the day, it is a learning process, and children are constantly learning while playing, even if it doesn't seem like it.

Parents whose children tend to become the most successful players are the parents who understand that the most influential factor to their child's success is that their child owns the experience. Their kids love to play, and their intrinsic joy while playing is what leads to a motivation to continuously play and try to get better, as opposed to their parents being the driving force.

Parents need to understand that if their child is constantly concerned with what his/her parents are thinking, that it will deter development.

Again, with parents who were successful players themselves, they seem to understand that regardless of whatever ambitions they may have for their children, if their children don't intrinsically have the desire to be their best, then they never will be. These parents also seem to know that in order for their children to develop that intrinsic motivation, they must simply be supportive, and not try to force upon such ambition. This way, the child does not worry about everything their parents are thinking.

On top of this, these "high level" parents are also not overly worried about any given mistake. This is because they know what it takes to get to an incredibly high playing level. They have the understanding that mistakes will be made and that, in time, their kids will overcome them.

As parents, if we want our children to reach their full potential, it's important that we "release them to the game" and be conscious of how much we are influencing them when they are playing.

Next time we are at our child's match, try and consider some of these questions:

1. Is our child constantly looking over at us for validation when they play, or are they consumed with the enjoyment and focus of playing?

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and the coach, or are we smiling, letting them know everything is good?

4. After the game, are we going over details from their performance, or are we telling them we loved watching and supporting them, no matter the outcome?



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Well said.

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