



Helping motivate your undersized kid

This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.

“My son is an 8th grade youth lacrosse player who has been pretty successful with his club up until this season. The problem is, he's later reaching puberty than almost all his teammates. This year in particular is starting out tough. I look across the field and can see him because he's at least a head shorter than just about everyone out there. It doesn't help that he's always been among the smaller players on his team, but this year in particular the difference is very pronounced. He won't get a lot of playing time right now, and I'm kind of OK with that because he'll get way physically overmatched. But how can I keep him motivated, and keep him from getting discouraged, until he starts to catch up physically?”

PCA Response by David Jacobson, PCA Trainer & Senior Marketing Communications and Content Manager

Because you say your son has always been among the smaller players, perhaps the best way to encourage and support him is to help him cope with the long-term reality of being relatively undersized. If it happens that his size takes off when puberty hits, that will be a bonus. Meanwhile, it is important that he not feel handicapped by not yet having hit puberty, that he not use that fact as a crutch or excuse and that he feel empowered to try his hardest regardless of size.

The basis of PCA's focus on Mastery of Sport in our live workshops, online courses, books and collection of free advice at www.PCDevZone.org is that a mastery approach provides the athlete with a sense of control that reduces anxiety. One of the principles within this Mastery approach is to control the controllables (effort, attitude, etc.) and let go of the uncontrollable (in this case, relative size). Helping your son strive to be his best, regardless of comparison to others, should keep him motivated.

The more attention called to his size, the more that “disadvantage” may weigh on him. The possible exception is if you highlight aspects of lacrosse where his size may be an advantage.

Please keep in mind that how you help your son adjust to these realities will inform how he handles analogous matters in other aspects of his life. For example, if he feels ill equipped in an element of his future employment (i.e., just not a naturally good public speaker), he will need to find ways to improve or overcome. So, hopefully, your conversation with him on the matter of lacrosse extends into other areas and he can take some life lessons through sports.

For more questions and answers like this, or to submit your own question to the Ask PCA blog, visit:

www.positivecoach.org/our-tools/ask-pca

For more Resources, visit: www.PCDevZone.org

For more information on Positive Coaching Alliance, visit: www.PositiveCoach.org