



FOR THE SPORTS PARENT

The Game Belongs to the Child.

What your athlete actually needs from you
before, during, and after competition.

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I thought I was a pretty good sports parent.

My daughter agreed to disagree.

She had clear views on when I was allowed to coach. When I wasn't. How I could cheer. And what she needed from me after a game — or didn't.

I haven't always gotten it right. But I've learned — as both a sports parent and a mental performance coach. Here's what I wish I'd known earlier.

THE ONE THING THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

The game belongs to the child. Not the parent.

This sounds obvious. It isn't — because as a parent, you're invested too. You see things happening. And sometimes a comment leaves your mouth before your brain can stop it.

The shift happens when you understand that your sideline role is not your home role. At home you guide and advise. On the sideline — you're the safe place they look for when things get hard.

Your presence is not about what you say. It's about what your athlete feels when they look over at you.

WHAT YOUR ATHLETE ACTUALLY NEEDS

No Two Athletes Need the Same Thing.

One of the biggest mistakes sports parents make is assuming their child needs what they would have needed. Or what their other child needed. Or what seems logical after a tough game.

1 The Analyzer

Wants to talk through everything. Let them lead — ask questions, don't give answers.

2 The Sandwich First

Needs food, quiet, and time before any conversation. Don't take the silence personally — it's decompression, not rejection.

3 The One Who Wants to Be Heard And Understood

"That looked really hard" or "I think I saw you going through something during that moment — did I see that correctly?" go further than "here's what you should have done." And if they correct you, let them — it is their experience and their emotions. Then listen. Advice later — and only if they ask.

4 The One Who Just Wants a Parent

Doesn't want analysis. Wants to know you're proud of them regardless of the result. That the relationship is bigger than the sport.

The question worth asking:

"After a game — do you want my feedback, do you want me to just listen, stay close, or give you space?"

And then — do what they say. Even if it feels counterintuitive.

Before, During & After

BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
+ Do Keep the routine normal — familiar is calming. Let them lead the conversation. If they're quiet, match it. "I'm looking forward to watching you" is enough. - Avoid Last-minute technique tips or reminders. Talking about what's at stake (they already know). Projecting your own nerves onto them.	+ Do Cheer effort, not just results — always positive towards your child, other children, and everyone who makes this possible. Stay calm when they make mistakes — they're watching you. Be the face they want to find when they look over. - Avoid Coaching from the sideline. Visible frustration or disappointment at errors. Comparing to teammates or opponents.	+ Do Let them set the tone — follow their lead. "How do you feel?" before any evaluation. Celebrate effort and character, not just performance. - Avoid "You should have..." or "Why didn't you..." Immediate analysis or feedback (unless they ask). Dwelling on losses longer than they do.

THE MOST POWERFUL THINGS YOU CAN SAY

Four Phrases Worth Keeping.

After a competition — win or lose:

"I loved watching you play."

Nothing more needed. It says: I was present, I enjoyed it, and my love is not connected to the result.

When they're struggling and you don't know what to say:

"I can see this is hard. I'm here."

You don't need to fix it. Just be a steady presence while they find their own way through.

When they want to quit:

"Tell me what feels hard right now."

Before decisions, before solutions — just listen. Most of the time, quitting isn't what they actually need.

When you've said the wrong thing:

"I said that wrong. What I meant was: I believe in you."

Repair matters more than perfection. Showing how to acknowledge a mistake is one of the best things sport can teach.

WANT TO GO DEEPER?

If your athlete keeps underperforming when it counts — not from lack of talent, but because something shuts down under pressure — that's worth looking at.

The **Performance Scan** is where most families start. Two sessions. A clear picture. A concrete first step.

Or just reply to this message. I read every one.

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