BEFORE IT'S OVER

BEFORE IT'S OVER CHECKLIST



The high school sports years are surprisingly short. As parents and caregivers, we have the power to help make this experience a cherished memory rather than a stressful pressure cooker. This checklist helps you keep the focus on your athlete's growth, protect their experience, and truly savor every remaining moment.

BEFORE IT'S OVER, I WILL...

- **Align on their goals, not mine:** Ask my athlete what they want out of this season and honor their personal motivation – whether it's high-level competition, fitness, or fun with friends.
  - ☐ ***Try this:*** Print out two copies of the Parent/Caregiver 100-Point Exercise on page 3, and each fill one out.
- **Savor the joy of watching them play:** Express gratitude to my athlete for the opportunity to watch them compete, focusing on the joy of the game rather than the outcome.
  - ☐ ***Try this:*** Tell them: "I love watching you play and compete!"
- **Keep post-game conversations safe and supportive:** Give my athlete space after games, listening to understand their perspective, avoiding unasked-for critiques, and letting them lead the conversation when they are ready.
  - ☐ ***Try this:*** After a game, tell your athlete: "I'm proud of your effort today! Let me know if you want to talk about the game anytime."
- **Let them own the experience:** Empower my athlete to speak directly with their coach about playing time or other challenges when appropriate, while giving them space to build confidence and independence, only stepping in if they need support navigating concerns about fairness, bias, power dynamics, or safety.
  - ☐ ***Try this:*** Instead of stepping in to talk to the coach, role-play the conversation with your athlete, with you as the coach, so they can practice advocating for themselves, listening to criticisms, and creating a plan to move forward.
- **Praise growth and improvement:** Nurture my athlete's growth mindset by praising their effort and development, not results. Even in losses, point to where you've seen them improve.
  - ☐ ***Try this:*** Replace "Great goal!" with "I love how you got into position for that shot - your hard work is paying off!"

NFHS x POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE

BEFORE IT'S OVER, THE GAME PLAN IS SIMPLE. MORE THIS. LESS THAT.

Join the movement! Click here or scan the QR code to download our free toolkit.

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- **Trust the coaches:** Leave tactics, lineups, and strategy to those whose job it is and support the coach in developing life skills for my athlete.
  - ☐ ***Try this:*** Next time you disagree with a coach's decision, take a deep breath, regulate your emotions, and consider whether your concern is about a coaching decision you can respectfully accept, or something that may require you to advocate for your athlete's safety, well-being, or inclusion.
- **Respond with control to challenging situations:** Model emotional control and sportsmanship on the sidelines to provide an example of how to handle challenging situations not only to the athletes, but other parents as well.
  - ☐ ***Try this:*** When you feel yourself getting worked up on the sidelines, take a deep breath, consider taking a brief walk, or count to 10 to help regulate your emotions.
- **Build the sideline community:** Welcome other parents and caregivers, celebrate every athlete's progress, and foster a positive, inclusive environment for the entire sports community.
  - ☐ ***Try this:*** Pass out a list of each athlete's first name and jersey number to the sidelines so everyone can cheer for individuals by name.
- **Check in throughout the season:** Provide a safe space for my athlete to express their thoughts and feelings about the season. Listen without judgment, validate their feelings, and focus on the experience rather than the team's results.
  - ☐ ***Try this:*** Engage in a low-pressure activity, such as going outside to play catch, and casually ask how they feel the season is going. Guide them to talk about their feelings, not results.
- **Focus on the whole person:** Consistently remind my athlete that their worth as a human being is never tied to their stats, playing time, or scoreboard. Celebrate my athlete's growth as a person as well as an athlete.
  - ☐ ***Try this:*** After a tough game: "Today's game was hard. I'm really proud that you kept your effort up despite the score!"

The Before It's Over toolkit will provide you with actionable tools to help you accomplish this checklist.

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WHAT ARE YOUR SPORTS GOALS?

This **100-point exercise** can help parents/caregivers and their athlete understand each other's sports goals. Use the form to allocate a total of 100 points, indicating the emphasis you place on the various goals listed. Parents/Caregivers and athletes should fill out their forms individually and use them to prompt conversation about their shared sports experience.

_____ Become a good athlete
_____ Learn new skills
_____ Learn to play the sport
_____ Learn to overcome challenges
_____ Learn different perspectives
_____ Compete to win
_____ Build self-confidence
_____ Learn to process defeat
_____ Develop life skills
_____ Learn to support teammates
_____ Have fun
_____ Make friends
_____ Earn a college scholarship

_____ Other specify: _____

_____ Other specify: _____

_____ Other specify: _____

TOTAL:
100

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