

# HELPING YOUR ATHLETE WHO IS LACKING PLAYING TIME

Watching our athletes put in endless effort and not be rewarded with playing time can be incredibly frustrating for a sports parent/caregiver. It can be equally or more frustrating, and even discouraging for the athletes themselves. A positive sports parent/caregiver sees this as an opportunity to help their athlete develop resilience and voice while dealing with adversity.

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## TIPS TO SUPPORT YOUR ATHLETE

- ✓ Provide unconditional support. Celebrate your athlete's successes and improvements regardless of playing time awarded.
- ✓ Check-in with your athlete regularly to understand their perspective. Listen to understand, confirm what you hear, and validate their experiences. Be an ally in these conversations to ensure that, when concerns arise, athletes' feel heard - especially in environments where biases may exist.
- ✓ Collaborate with your athlete to set attainable goals that highlight their effort - i.e. In practice today, whenever the other team has the ball, hustle back on defense as hard as you can.
- ✓ Encourage your athlete to focus on what they can control - giving their best effort, looking for opportunities to learn and improve, and supporting teammates.
- ✓ Support your athlete's self-advocacy. Giving athletes the opportunity to self-advocate for playing time will help them develop important life skills while fostering important interactions with their coach.

### **Provide the athlete what they may need to engage in this conversation, like:**

- ✓ Role play the conversation with them beforehand
  - ✓ Help them develop a list of talking points they want to be sure to hit
  - ✓ Collaborate on what potential solutions could be
  - ✓ Prepare them to receive critical feedback
- ✓ Avoid making negative comments about the coach or coach's decisions in front of your athlete to help maintain their trust in the coach. Acknowledge and address concerns about fairness and equity if they arise while maintaining a respectful dialogue about the coach's decisions.

As a sports parent/caregiver you can support your athlete in developing many life skills which can increase their playing time opportunities. Ultimately, a sports parent/caregiver's role is to support their athlete in having the best possible sports experience.

*Written with Steve Henderson, PCA Trainer*

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