

Parents and Players—Sowing Your Own Seeds

Now days, most high school, summer and college coaches know what it is like to deal with parents. Most parents are great supporters of the program that their daughters play for and are very helpful when asked to do whatever the coach needs done. But then there are the others; the parents who are always calling the coach because their daughter is not playing as much as they want them to play or the daughter is not playing the position that she wants to play; the same parents who are sitting in the stands downgrading the coaching staff because they feel their daughter should be doing something different, like hitting in a different spot or hitting away instead of bunting. But none are coaching their own teams.

Parents like that need to realize that they are not helping their daughters at all and they are probably hurting their chances not only on that team but in getting a college scholarship to certain schools. I know when I recruited a player for my college team, I had the parents come in with them for the visit. There were times when I had a bad feeling about the parents and the player so didn't recruit the player anymore. There were times when I really liked the player but knew the parents were going to be a pain. I had to have that conversation with the parents about my role and their role. Most of the time, the parents would listen to us and would conform to the way we wanted them to be around this team. Sometimes they didn't, and we eventually parted ways. When that happens it is sad because it is the player's career, not the parents, and the player is the one that gets hurt by this.

What the parents have to remember is that when they or their child is a negative force on their high school or summer teams, the college coaches will find out about it. When that happens, it is doubtful that the good college coach will even recruit that player. Why would they want to put up with that during the season? It detracts from coaching the team and team unity.

To me, it's sad to see the parents trying to coach the team or manipulate the coaching staff.

- What are they teaching the young player—their daughter?
- How is that young player now going to be as a parent—the same way?
- Do you ever wonder why kids seem so spoiled these days? Maybe it is because they are being spoiled.
- Maybe it is because the parents are fighting their battles for them instead of the player dealing with their own problems.

This is a team sport, which means it takes a team to win and be successful. Before anyone complains about playing time or what position is being played, they should take the time to listen and watch what is being taught. Then they need to be objective, not subjective, when it comes to their child and the child's ability in relationship to the others on the team. Most parents do not really know the ins and outs of the sport of softball, so they need to learn them before criticizing.

A good coach looks at the game with the whole team in mind—not just one person. If the coaches are knowledgeable in the sport and have successful track records, I might tend to think they know what they are doing. I would put my faith in them and wonder if my child was doing what they were expected to be doing.

Parents need to realize this also about a thing called early and late maturers which may or may not apply to their child.

- Elementary school students, junior high and early high school age kids, may fall into the categories of being an early and late maturer. (See article, [Working with Younger Players: Are They Early or Late Maturers?](#))
- This means that on the younger teams, the skilled positions (P, SS, C, 1B) will be played by the early maturers because they are **physically** ready before the non-early maturers.
- The late maturers **will** catch up to them in most cases.
- This means the early maturer may level off and may not be as good at that position as someone else as they get into the 14-15 and above age groups.
- The early maturer who has leveled off may be put at a different position because they simply are not as good as someone else now. However, they may actually be better at another position than they played before.

If the player or parent does not understand early/late maturing and complains about not playing that position

anymore, they are running the risk of the player being removed from the team, or if they are still not in college, the good college coach may not recruit them at all if they know that the parent will be a problem.

We see this especially in pitching. An early maturer can blow the ball past kids of their own age group in the early years. But as they get older, others may catch up to them physically. When the pitcher still tries to blow the ball by them, they fail. They have not really learned the art of pitching. Could they still be an effective pitcher? Of course, but the player has to be willing to change their thinking about blowing the ball past the hitters. They need to learn to change their approach on the mound, learn to pitch not just throw, and be willing to accept a different role, of course. They may have just gone from the fireballer role to the junk ball pitcher role, but **both** are extremely effective in college depending on the situation. A lot of college players can hit a fastball a lot better than they can hit movement and/or a slower speed. In many cases, the parents have more of a problem than the player in changing their roles and they put pressure on the player to stay a fireballer even though there is not as much fire in the ball as there was when they were younger.

Could the early maturer be good at another position? Of course, I've had numerous players like that. I had an All-State shortstop come in that I switched to second base because she was a natural there. But in high school she had to play SS because they didn't have anyone else. She became an All American at second base even though she had never played there until we switched her in college. I had another All-State first baseman that we changed to the outfield and she also became an All-American at that position even though she had never played there before college. The good coach knows what the team needs for them to be successful and they know that everything is all a matter of getting the right fit.

Here is what I want everyone to understand **AND I MEAN UNDERSTAND**.

TO THE PARENTS:

- The good coaches will take care of your children while they are away from you.
- The good coaches will watch their academics while you are not there.
- The good coaches will help them when they are faced with critical life situations while you are not with them at school.
- The good coaches will go above and beyond to insure your child's well being.
- The good coaches will protect your child to the best of their ability.
- The good coaches will teach the game of softball on and off the field, and relate it to the game of life.

These same good coaches are quitting or getting fired because of their own players and their parents. The same people the coach is trying to protect and teach are turning on them because of decisions the coach makes that they feel are the best for the team.

Leave the coaching of the team to the coaches. Don't interfere with their college coach's decisions about the team and their daughter's position on the team. Change the attitude of "It's not my kid's fault so it has to be their teacher's fault." Some college administrators are like store managers—the customer is always right. Since the parent pays the bill, they must be right. So the coach is the one who gets fired and the player doesn't have to follow the rules nor work hard to be a better player. Some summer coaches will give in under the parent's pressure if they are afraid of losing especially a good player.

So what is the outcome?

- The older, more knowledgeable tougher coaches, are retiring or losing their jobs.
- The coaches who will hold your child accountable for their negative actions are leaving the sport.
- The coaches who will do what is the best for all players on the team, not just a few stars or complainers, are leaving the sport.
- The coaches who will actually make your child a better adult are leaving the sport.
- New coaches are coming in to the sport that are not holding the players accountable and in a lot of cases are caving into the parent's wishes.
- This is weakening the team and not helping any of the players become a better player or a more mature person.

These things **will** happen without a doubt if the above happens:

1. If the coach is weak, the coach will give in and the team and your child will suffer on a team that has lost its potential.

2. If the coach is a confident and competent coach and the parent continues to interfere to a point where it hurts the team, your child will be removed from the team.

3. If the parent goes to the administration to complain because his or her child is not playing or not playing the position she wants and the administration backs down, **everyone loses**. The team loses a good coach and now they will have a coach who lacks character and the conviction to stand up to the parents.

If your child is a high school player and you as the parent try to "BE THE COACH" of that team and problems occur, your child probably will not even be recruited by many good college coaches. Why would a good college coach want the hassles?

CHOOSE COLLEGE COACHES WISELY AND THEN LEAVE THEM ALONE

My comment to players and parents who are unhappy and will not adjust to the system is that **"The team will go on with or without you"**. I always hoped they would listen and let me help the player grow as a player but sometimes they just go their own way. I lost very few, but every time that this did happen, the player went to a lesser team and never had a chance to go to a college National Tournament with us and that is sad. But the player and their parents made that choice.

The Team Will Always Go On With or Without You!