

Time to Meet the Parents

Celeste Knierim

When the teams tentative plan for the season is finished, it is time for a Meet and Greet with the parents and the players. This is a great time for some social time around a dinner, picnic or snacks so everyone can renew summer friendships and greet any new parents and players.

This is also a great time to have the parents fill out an information sheet with all the normal information for the family:

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| * player's name | * nickname |
| * parent's name | * address |
| * siblings | * home phone |
| * cell phone | * birthday |
| * player medical issues | * and more if wanted |

The player's medical issues are very important. The coach needs to know about any current or past injuries and/or any medical problems that could be affected by exercise, heat or anything else that could occur during the game.

Seizures, low blood sugar, blood disorders and many more need to be confidentially discussed with the parents and coaches before practices and the season starts. This information needs to be documented and kept strictly between the parents, the coaching staff and doctor. But it is imperative that the coach knows about the issues and is prepared to handle anything that could happen during a team function.

During this meeting, the coach should talk to the parents about the philosophy for the team and the general plans for the team. The coach should explain how the parents could help with the team **IF** the staff wants help from them. Parents can help the players at home to practice their skills in between team practices and games. This only is beneficial if the parents are teaching the same way the coaching staff is teaching them.

Parents of younger players like 6-8U especially need to practice some things with their daughters at home on the off days from practice. Again though, it has to be what the coaching staff is teaching so the players are not confused.

The most important ones the parents can help them with would be their locomotor, non-locomotor and hand/eye coordination skills. These skills are very important to the development of the player's coordination. Simply having them do some hopping, skipping, marching, balancing and jumping skills will help them with their coordination. There are many more activities for them to try and accomplish as they progress. Simply tossing the ball to them numerous times while varying the tosses will help with their hand/eye tracking skills. Coordination and tracking skills are essential in performing any athletic skills properly.

This meeting is the time to talk to the parents about their role with the team.

Sample topics for parents at the meeting.

-Share with the parents that it is great to be passionate about the game, but the parents need to realize that the cheering is to be positive and not negative.

They should definitely refrain from coaching their daughter from the stands. They need to be listening to the coaches not the parents and it is confusing to the players.

It is great to cheer but the cheering needs to be positive for every player on the field and that includes any comments made in the stands. Absolutely no negative comments are to be said to or about their own daughter or any other child on the field including the other teams players and coaches. This also includes the umpires.

-The parents also need to understand that the coaches are in charge of the teams.

The coach's job is on the field and the parent's job is to stay in the stands and support the team and their child in positive ways. Parents who undermine the efforts of the coach to teach the players the game and strategy are hurting the team. If a parent thinks they can do a better job of coaching, that parent should start their own team and be the coach.

-The parents need to understand the importance of getting the players to games and practices on time.

Most players cannot drive themselves to the practices/games so it is up to the parents to be responsible for them being on time. Being on time for either is imperative to the unity of the team. If the player cannot be at a practice or a game, the parent has the responsibility to relay that information to the coach as early as possible.

-The parents of the younger players can help their daughters at home to achieve the skills needed to be successful during the games.

Parents of the younger players can really help the team and their daughter when they practice with them outside of practices. It would be beneficial for the coaches to have a practice for the parents or a handout teaching the parents the basics of the game and the basic skills the players should be learning.

Explaining to the parents why something is being done a certain way eliminates a lot of questioning when something happens that the parents do not understand. It also helps keep everyone on the same coaching page.

-The parents need to understand how important it is to reinforce the rules and training wishes of the coaches.

Just like the coaches should educate the parents about their philosophy of coaching, the older players need to be told also. Players at a certain age will want to know why they are doing things a certain way. Most players have never been taught the proper way to perform the skills nor be taught why. This includes the strategy of the game.

After teaching the parents and the players the hows and whys of the game, the parents can really help by reinforcing those philosophies. Kids are kids and some will complain especially if their playing time is lower than they think it should be. It is beneficial if the parents support the vision of the coaches with their kids.

-Teaching responsibility should be a life lesson not just a softball lesson

If the player is old enough to play a sport then they are old enough to be responsible for their equipment, actions and attitudes. Too many times parents of players have picked up after a child and even carried their equipment for them. That is the player's responsibility. The player is responsible for the care of their equipment-cleaning their glove and spikes after each use, making sure their bag is clean so no dirt transfers on to their gloves, making sure their personal bat is protected from damage and keeping track of every piece of their equipment and uniform. Making them accountable for their own things we help them in their lives well past softball.

This is just a sample of a meeting with the parents. Try to include things important to your team and your coaching philosophies to head off any problems later. If the parents are told how things will work throughout the season, hopefully any problems will be small ones.