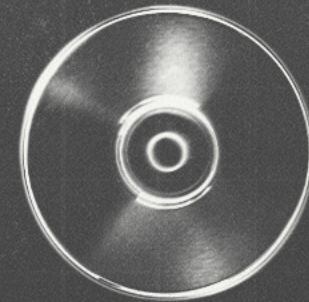


Generation to **GENERATION**

Uncommon Parenting Conference



Navigating the Minefield of Youth Sports

John Cox



Uncmn

2005 – The Journey Begins



- Katelyn (5)
- Sydney (3)
- EmJ (2)
- Jay (10 months)
- Lucy (not born yet)



18 Years Later

- More than 1500 games
- Thousands of practices
- Tens of thousands of dollars
- Dad and mom are retired coaches: soccer, basketball, and lacrosse
- The kids:
 - Katelyn is married and a teacher
 - Sydney is a senior on the UT soccer team
 - EmJ is a junior on the UT soccer team
 - Jay is enjoying intramurals at OU and may try to walk onto the football team
 - Lucy is a junior on her high school soccer team

Two objectives today

1. Help you successfully navigate the world of youth sports
2. Help you and your child thrive in each of the three stages of youth sports
 - Kindergarten through third grade
 - Fourth grade through eighth grade
 - High school and beyond

The Big Picture

- Our main goal for our kids – Heaven, not Harvard
- We live in a sports crazy society and it's getting crazier
- Youth sports is a big business – club teams are selling the dream (scholarships, access to elite colleges, etc.)
 - Parents want the best for their children
 - Athletic success brings status for kids and parents
- There are pros and cons with youth sports. You can't change this, but you can work to maximize the upside and minimize the downside

Pros and Cons of Youth Sports

Pros

- Relationships
- Physical activity
- Building confidence/grit
- Teamwork
- Organizational skills
- Opportunity for influence

Cons

- Time consuming
- Interferes with family activities: dinners, church, small groups
- Expensive
- Falling down the rabbit hole

Golden Rules for Parents

- Stay focused on the goal (Heaven, not Harvard)
- Prepare your child for the path, not the path for your child
- Fall in love with the process, not the results
 - Development and learning is a process
- It's not about you – it's a warning sign if:
 - You get upset at games
 - You draw status from your children's performance
- It's not about college scholarships
- Focus on fun, character development, and loving others
- The parent's role is to encourage. Don't coach (and don't criticize)
- Help your child to know their role, to embrace their role, and to add value

Golden Rules for Parents

- Get involved. Sports is a great way to have influence with kids and parents
- Take advantage of car time
- In looking for teams, the coach is what matters
 - The club name is secondary
 - The league is secondary
- Get and keep perspective:
 - There is always someone bigger, faster, and stronger
 - There are always more games
 - The referees are not against you

Three Stages of Youth Sports

	K-3	4-8	HIGH SCHOOL & BEYOND
COACH	Parents	Parents/Professionals	Professionals
TIME COMMITMENT	Low	Moderate	High
GAME TIME	Everyone plays equal time	Transition from equal time to starters and subs	Best players play
PRIMARY FOCUS	Having fun	Development first, then winning	Winning first, then development
COST	Low	Club – High Rec – Low	Club – High High School – Low

Thriving in K-3 Sports

- Focus on fun
- Build relationships with kids and their parents
- Be a student of your child – what makes them light up?
- Expose your child to lots of activities
- As a coach:
 - Your goal is to help the kids enjoy it. If they enjoy it, they will come back. If they come back, you can teach them how to play.
 - Greet kids personally when they arrive. Encourage them when they leave
 - Focus on skill development at the start of practice, then play
 - Get other parents involved: multiple stations and short lines. This maximizes development time and minimizes waiting in line time

Thriving in K-3rd Grade Sports



- Post-game snacks are a big deal

Thriving in 4th-8th Grade Sports

- Let your child take the lead – you can't want it more than them
- Help your child find their niche
- Focus on finding great coaches - encouragers and developers
- Certain sports and certain skills require more development than others (e.g., gymnastics vs. football)
- Four traits that are shared by exceptional athletes
 - Athleticism – speed, lateral mobility, hand-eye coordination, body control
 - Skills – throwing, kicking, shooting, athletic moves
 - Ability to understand and read the game
 - Confidence

Thriving in High School and Beyond

- Opportunities in high school are shaped by the size and nature of the high school
- There will be pressure to focus – coaches say they love multi-sport athletes until you start missing their practices
- Help your child process options:
 - Does your child want to play in college?
 - Does your child love the grind - practices, skill work, conditioning, etc.?
 - What about D2 and D3 options?
- If they want to play in college, take the initiative. Don't wait to be discovered. Get to know coaches. Attend college camps.
- Start with schools they want to attend. Then focus on playing opportunities.
- College intramurals are a lot of fun. Many of the benefits of playing at a fraction of the time and commitment.



Nearing the end of the road

- Great memories
- Lifelong friendships
- Lots of character development
- Lots of leadership lessons
- It's been a means to an end

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Q&A