

PERSPECTIVES



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A Word with the Coach

“Kendra sits the bench, and is losing confidence and interest in the sport. I think I better have a word with the coach.” Few parents with a child in sports have not, at one time or another, faced this dilemma. Personally, I have faced it as a parent, as a coach, and as a intermediary between the coach and parent. What are the appropriate ground rules and what is the best approach when a concerned parent wants to “have a word with the coach”?

I once attended a coaching seminar where Lute Olson was one of the featured speakers. He explained that “I tell all my players’ parents that I am available all season long to talk with them at any time about anything, with one exception: we never ever will discuss playing time during the season.” However, there is no single issue more important to parents and the coach than assigning playing positions and allocating playing time. So – is Lute Olson’s rule a fair one?

If your child is playing at the highly competitive club level or higher, Olson’s rule is fair. All coaches should, however, still indicate at the start of the season, in plain and simple language, what their policy is with respect to playing time. If they play to win and therefore make no promises of equal playing time, your child and you are accepting this ground rule by agreeing to play on the team and should not later complain to the coach about playing time.

Alternatively, if your child is playing at the recreational league level, virtually all recreational sponsors (YMCA, YWCA, Little League Baseball, Bobby Sox) have rules and bylaws governing the coach’s conduct. All coaches and parents should have a copy of these rules and be familiar with them. With respect to playing time at this recreational level, the coach no doubt has written directives to make playing time equitable and it is always appropriate for parents to call him on it if he fails to do so.

Is Playing Time a legitimate question to raise with the coach? At the recreational level, of course. At the competitive club level, perhaps not.



ROADWAY SAFETY AND HELMET LAWS

Bicycle Helmets: Inexpensive Lifesavers

Tucson has been rated one of the premier bicycling communities in the nation. This honor brings with it greater potential for bike accidents. The City of Tucson has addressed this situation by providing designated bike lanes, bicycle education, and enforcement of helmet and traffic laws to reduce the number of accidents and injuries in the Tucson area.

Unfortunately, not every bike rider wears a helmet. Why not? The main reason is that the majority of states do not require riders over 18 to wear helmets. In Tucson, only those under the age of 18 are required to wear a properly fitted and fastened helmet that meets current federal safety standards, or face a \$50 fine. Many riders do not wear helmets, but they should, and the facts prove it: in 1994

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continued on page 3

continued on page 3

A Word with the Coach, cont. from page 1

If and when you decide a meeting with the coach is in order, there are right and wrong ways to do it. The wrong way is to surprise the coach in a public setting, such as right after a hotly contested game, and loudly take him to task in front of other parents and players. The right way is to tell the coach, privately, that you want to speak with him and then to arrange a comfortable, private setting to have that meeting.

Meetings with coach should be pre-arranged, comfortable and private.

Put yourself in the coach's shoes. If a parent has an issue, wouldn't you like to know ahead of time what the issue is so that you can spend some time thinking about it before you actually meet to discuss it? Wouldn't you feel more responsive and accommodating in a friendly and comfortable environment, with everyone expressing legitimate concerns in a polite and calm manner?

I think you get the picture. Remember, unless you are playing at a very high competitive level, the coaches are mostly volunteers who are trying to do the best they can, and are probably involved because they enjoy the sport, and want to help young people also enjoy the sport, and perhaps, even learn something about it.



When you meet with the coach, keep it friendly. Be direct and specific with your questions, then be

quiet and listen to the coach's answers. Always ask what your player—and you—can do to become more important contributors to the team. Whenever possible, volunteer your time. There is no whining where there is no participation. With open communication, players and parents can make intelligent decisions about which teams they want to play on and they'll be better able to give proper deference and respect to the coach and the game.

—Ted Schmidt

Bicycle Helmets, cont. from page 1

(the most recent statistical year), there were 27 bicyclists killed in Arizona — and not one was wearing a safety helmet!

Nationwide, approximately 540,000 bicyclists visit emergency rooms each year. Of those, 67,000 suffer head injuries and 27,000 sustain brain injury. According to national studies, 85% of those injuries could have been prevented (or at least reduced in severity) by wearing a helmet. Helmets can be purchased at any major retailer for as little as \$10.

Go to dot.ci.tucson.az.us/bicycle for more on Tucson's Bicycle Program and helmet safety standards.



Required or Not, There's No Question: Motorcycle Helmets Protect

Motorcycle helmet laws have been a contentious issue for years. Lawmakers struggle to balance personal freedoms with the costs to society of crash-related injuries. The

National Highway Transportation Safety Administration sets the federal standards for helmet requirements, but gives the states latitude to define and enforce those standards. As a result, many states have repealed their mandatory helmet laws for "all riders," and limit enforcement to riders under the age of 18. Florida discovered that repealing its helmet laws led to a significant increase in accidents, injuries, and related medical costs. Consequently, Florida motorcycle riders under 21 must once again wear a helmet, unless they have at least \$10,000 in medical insurance coverage.

Arizona requires all motorcycle or motor-driven cycle riders 18 or under to wear securely fastened "protective headgear" at all times. This includes eye protection or a windshield. Presently, the term "protective head gear" is still being defined by the state legislature.

As with bicycling, head injury is a leading cause of death in motorcycle crashes. While a helmet may not absolutely guarantee survival, it effectively reduces the likelihood of being seriously injured or killed. So, if you ride a bike or motorcycle, wear a helmet, regardless of whether or not the law requires you to do so. It's smarter. It's safer. And it's easy to do.

—Robert L. Beal