

Sports

Tim Crone: Parents of athletes need to ask themselves hard questions

Posted May 19, 2018 at 12:04 AM

Summer weather is finally here. Golf tournaments are going, the crappie are biting, and baseball games are on daily. Life is good.

People ask me all the time what I do with all my spare time. What spare time?! With four grandchildren involved in soccer, baseball, softball, volleyball and competitive dance, we are non-stop busy. Add to that a 93-year-old mom who still thinks like a teenager.

Papa and Nana would not have it any other way. I do have a lot of time to observe young parents and the way the system currently works. We have gotten to know many of the parents by attending so many games with them over the past three or four years. They are a dedicated group who spend a lot of time and money in support of their kids. I admire my daughters and their husbands for the effort they put forth for their children's activities.

However, as an aging member of society, I am amazed at the need for teams to keep up with each other. A couple of weeks ago I attended my 5-year-old grandson's coach's pitch game. Both teams had state of the art custom-made uniforms, special bats, bat bags, top of line shoes and enough other equipment to suit out any high school team in the country.

One team had seven coaches and the other team had nine coaches all dressed out in matching coach's outfits. With a 12-man roster it was almost a coach for every player. The moms have look alike gear, so they can be readily recognized as a team supporter.

When the game started, everything went smooth, with the exception that the combined 16 coaches hollered instructions on every pitch. I am 67 and confused – how do you think the 5-year-old players felt? I was OK with it all until the second inning when a third base coach and pitching coach began to yell and harass the umpire, who was most likely no more than 13 years old.

I became a little salty about the situation. I did take the high road and kept my mouth shut (usually a challenge for me). Everyone most likely had good intentions but got caught up in their own agendas.

It is not OK to let down your guard in front of a young audience who looks up to you. I reverted to a message I received from a motivational speaker 15 years ago while I was still an AD. I would suggest that every parent pick up a copy online. It is entitled “The Role of Parents in Athletics” by Bruce E. Brown. It is worth the time and money.

He has a whole series of informative material available to parents and athletes. The following is a passage taken from his pamphlet and is relevant to parents and should be read each year before a sports season begins for their young athletes.

“As the season begins, parents are encouraged to ask themselves the following questions:

1. Do I want them to play? If so why?
2. What will be a successful season for me as a parent?
3. What are my goals for them?
4. What do I hope they gain from the experience?
5. What do I think their role will be on this team?

After the parents have answered these questions for themselves, they should remember their answers, and then when they have some quiet, uninterrupted time, ask their son or daughter the following questions. When their child responds, the parents should just listen without

talking.

1. Why are you playing?
2. What is a successful season?
3. What goals do you have?
4. What do you think your role will be on the team?

Once the parents have heard their kid's answers and compared them to their own responses, if both sets of expectations are the same, great. However, if the parent's responses are different from the child's, the kids need their parents to change their attitudes and accept theirs. NO QUESTIONS.

It should be a rational point of view for parents and children. This is 2018, but this is still relevant information and should be used to evaluate the reasons for participation in any activity.

Tell me you need 16 well-dressed coaches to coach 24 5-year-old kids in a coach's pitch game. One year at Blue Springs we had 222 players out for football. We only had eight coaches and had great success. Oh, by the way, we were lucky if we had look alike T-shirts at practice. Most of the kids playing will never remember what kind of uniforms they may have had, but they will never forget how the coach acted and treated them. The best thing about athletics is the great life lessons learned with their teammates and coaches – teachable moments. The great John Wooden summed it up very well: “Young people need models not critics.”

- My quote of the week comes the great college basketball coach Digger Phelps: “My definition of class is to always come off with a big first impression by looking good, feeling comfortable, yet caring for others. If you respect yourself, you will respect others. Just be yourself but remember – when you are in the public eye, someone is always looking for a negative. To show class is to show confidence in the way you look, the way you dress, and the way you act.”

– *Tim Crone, a William Chrisman High School graduate, is a former activities director and coach for Blue Springs High School and is a host of a weekly radio show, “Off the Wall with Tim Crone,” on KCWJ (1030 AM) 6 p.m. every Monday. He writes a weekly column for The Examiner. Reach him at t.crone@comcast.net.*