



**I WANT MY KID
TO LOVE....**

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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ARTICLE

Youth sports, including team fees, apparel, and travel is now a \$15.3 billion market, according to WinterGreen Research.

The entire landscape is changing and at a rapid pace. Cities across the country are investing millions of dollars in large sports complexes, with local municipalities persuaded by feasibility studies from organizations such as the National Association of Sports Commissions.

As a parent and a coach, I see these things happening across all youth sports. Some sports have more financial strain or time requirements than others, but it has all changed from the days of community-based or your local rotary league baseball teams. Call it competition or evolution, but it's changing every year and I'm not sure it's for the better.



HERE ARE SOME INTERESTING STATISTICS


70% of kids quit organized sports by age 13 (Positive Coaching Alliance).



Young athletes who participate in their primary sport for more than eight months in a year were more likely to report overuse injuries (American Journal of Sports Medicine -University of Wisconsin).

2% of high school athletes go on to play NCAA Division I. (Time Magazine, Sept 4, 2017 -Kid Sports Inc.).

70% of Olympic team athletes played multi-sports into high school (PGA.Coach -2019).





I believe most parents support their kid's athletic endeavors because 1) they feel sports will teach them life lessons such as teamwork, adversity, leadership and other lessons, or 2) their son/daughter truly enjoys the sport. I know there are some who are still living their lives through their kids, with hopes of their kid receiving an athletic scholarship. But I feel most parents fall into the first two camps.

I'm one who believes athletics is ONE way, not the only, way for a child to develop and stay out of trouble and learn important life lessons. Also, I think band, choir, 4-H Club, and Girl Scouts are other ways of receiving similar skills needed in life.

It's easy to get caught up in the rat race and sucked into all that is offered by youth athletics. If you want your child to LOVE golf, take the following prescription. It's not a guarantee, but it's much better than trying to force feed them something they don't need or want.

- 1) Read "Daddy Caddy on the Bag," by Rick Heard.
- 2) Make the first time to the golf course a positive one. Remember the first time your parents took you downhill skiing? It was cold, your skis got twisted going up the tow rope line while you straddle between your dad's knees. I'm guessing you didn't go back. Picture your child leaving the course with a high five, a candy bar or ice cream and a smile. When it's FUN, they will want to return.



- 3) Support them, don't coach them. Coaches' coach, and parents' parent. Remember Ty Tryon? Too much parent interference. Arguably one of the greatest young phenoms to play the game, but dad got too close. Tiger Wood's father may have taught him early on, but he knew when to hand Tiger off to a golf coach. If your kid is late for curfew, it's your responsibility. If his club is laid off, or if he's three-putting greens, leave it to the coach.
- 4) Buy the right fitting equipment. Kids shouldn't be swinging dad's old Wilson staff blades, and conversely, not all kids need 14 clubs at the age of eight. For years, PGA and LPGA tour professionals used pitching wedges from green side bunkers. The late Steve Ballesteros could even use a 3-iron successfully from the bunker! Now, that's a challenge.
- 5) Let them fail. Kids have way too much structure and organization in all youth athletics. Remember the days when your neighbors' fence was the home run wall, the tree was first base, and a triple was the most you could hit if no one was playing in right field? Twenty years ago, kids learned in an unstructured environment, and learned to play...on their own, without adults. Scuffles happened, but they learned on their own. Keep that same way of thinking with golf. Let them fail using a sand wedge from 10 feet off the green, to a pin on the back of a two-tier green. In time, your child will learn the bump and run concept using a 7-iron is the best and only choice.

6) See a PGA golf professional. Find one who is passionate about kids or one who has a great junior golf program. A competitive playing record is helpful, but not a must for a teacher.

7) Make it Fun! We've all had that micro-manager boss who is constantly over our shoulders telling us how and what to do. Most likely within six months you quit. It's the same thing for your kid. It's only a game, let them have fun and don't make it a job!



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