**Coaching your son or daughter can be a rewarding experience, as long as both of you are prepared for the unique challenges your relationship may face.**   *By Larry Lauer, PhD*

Coaching is a tough job. Unlike most professions, you work with young people under public scrutiny. Furthermore, people tend to measure success and failure only by what is on the scoreboard, not the teaching you do in practice. Sharing a team experience with a son or daughter can be a wonderful, positive opportunity, but it can also be a disaster.

On the flip side, coaching your son/daughter can put you, your child, and the team in a precarious position. The most obvious concern is the almost automatic reaction from others that your child will receive favoritism—a starting position and playing time without having to compete for them.

“You have to do your best to negate any perceived favoritism,” he says. “If you don’t, it can divide a program.”   Rumors and second-guessing a coach come quickly when the coach’s child is in the starting lineup. Parents who are frustrated their own child is not receiving playing time often fuel it. Players on the bench may also begin to question why the coach’s son is playing, and most importantly, question the coach’s fairness.

Several years ago in Indiana, a basketball coach’s son was sitting on the bench after having just broken a county scoring record, when a player on the court passed the ball to the seated teammate. The gesture was meant to show the team’s frustration with the coach, whom many felt was making his son the sole focus of the team’s offense. The student section erupted in laughter and it turned out that parents were also involved in initiating the prank. Although those involved were disciplined by the school and the athlete went on to play NCAA Division.

A reaction to perceived favoritism: being too hard on your child. Parent-coaches can be tougher on their kid because they expect more, putting more pressure on the child. The frustration of the child is, “Why do you expect more of me than anyone”?

At practice you may give your child negative feedback, thinking what’s on the field stays on the field. In reality, it does not.    You are not going home with the other athletes on the team and living with them 24/7.

***ESTABLISH RULES:***

1. **Have a meeting with the team and parents before the season.**

Outline your goals and expectations, be clear about how you will determine playing time and starting positions.

1. **Enlist the help of your DIV 1/Div 2 coach**. Ask him/her to make sure you don’t show any favoritism towards your son or daughter but just as important, that you don’t go too far the other way.
2. **Be good at what you are coaching**. No kid wants their father or mother to be the butt of any criticism.
3. **Take off your coaches hat at home**.

If rumors surface that you are playing favorites, it is important to address this head on, even though it will be uncomfortable. Talk to trusted parents about what the concerns are and if they are related to any particular coaching decisions or practices. Then, determine how best to squash the rumors.