

Roles Parents Can Play in Youth Sports



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Youth sports are not just for the kids. Music to a parent’s ear if they long to be involved, though let’s keep in mind the primary focus should stay on the kiddos. There are many different and rewarding roles that parents can play. Parents can pick one, or take on a couple/few concurrently. Dip your toe in or dive in the deep end with more than one role! In either scenario, parents can have a rewarding experience in youth sports.

Taking on a role in your athlete’s youth program is a generous gesture, but keep in mind that your athlete should still “own” his/her experience. Defining a role within the organization for which parents can direct energy in a positive/productive manner is important for the parent and the athlete. Being a soccer parent can be tough... being a bystander can be even tougher... so get involved in the right way! Here are some roles you can consider.

The Coach

Volunteering to coach seems like a daunting task for many. In reality, it is a step back into childhood. Not only do volunteers receive the support they need with equipment, coaching support, session planning apps, and even coaching education courses, they get something even better! It’s an opportunity to incorporate childhood favorites that help with conditioning and endurance. Games like freeze tag, sharks & minnows, Simon Says and many more. Having fun is a critical element in a player’s development, so go ahead, break out the games of your childhood and get them moving!

The Team Parent

Any Type A personalities out there? This sport needs you! Every team needs a communicator, a planner—someone to keep the group organized from a macro-level. A regular cadence of useful information, calendar planning, game day logistics, tournament

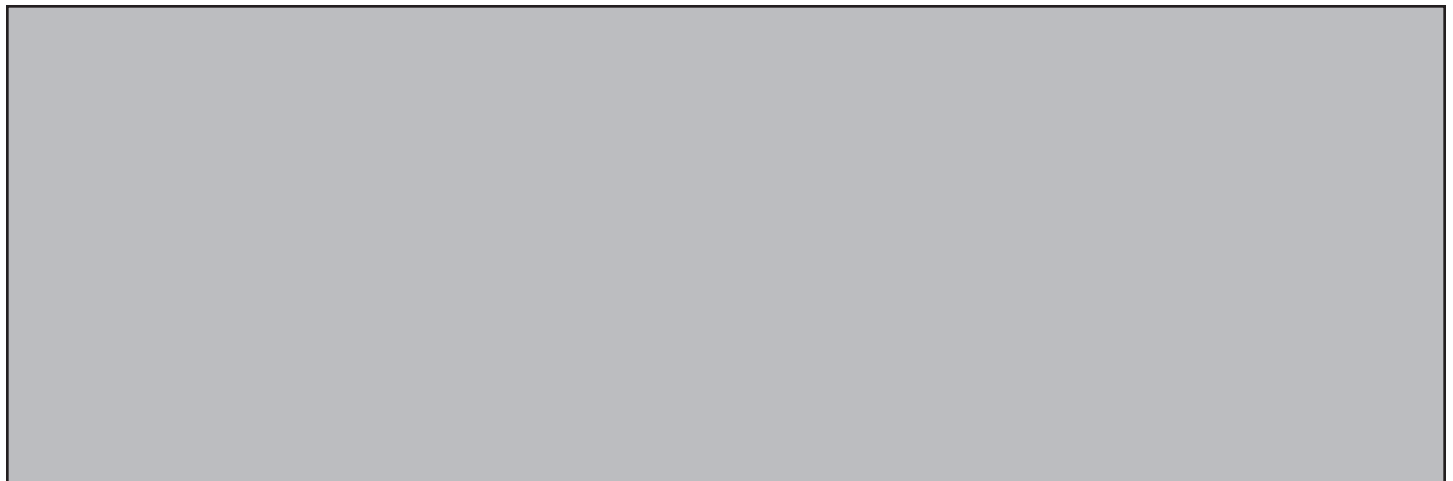
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organization, and meal/snack schedules all contribute to the success of the program and the kids' enjoyment of the season. It's an ideal way to support the coach, keep the group connected, and stay engaged with the families without stepping into the sport itself.

The Encourager

Be more than a spectator! Youth sports are not spectator sports solely meant to entertain the audience. Our children are playing youth sports to get exercise, learn valuable skills, and have fun. And the field is a great place to lend encouragement to all players. So, instead of 'spectator', be The Encourager. This person encourages and supports all the participants—on both teams and sidelines (this includes those guys and gals in yellow shirts with whistles!). In youth sports, everyone is learning the game. The encourager praises the efforts of all involved and is a cheerleader for the players, club, and organization. They support child, coach, and official development. And good news—anyone with a good attitude has the role locked!

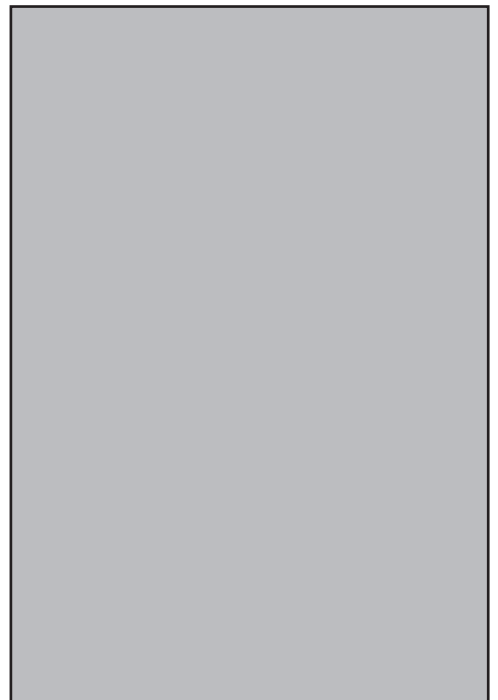
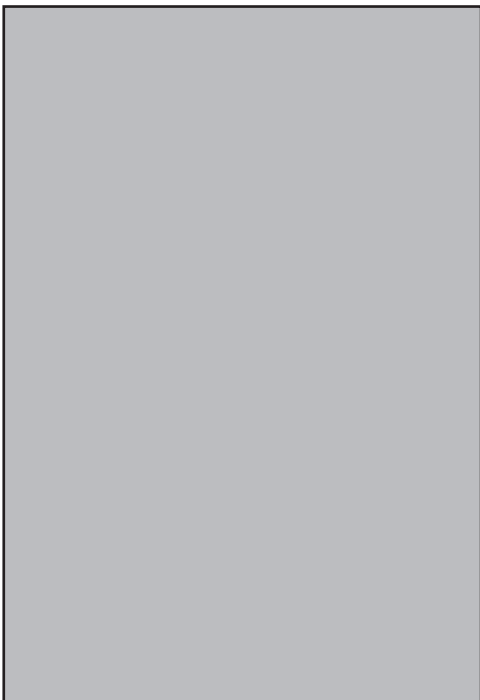
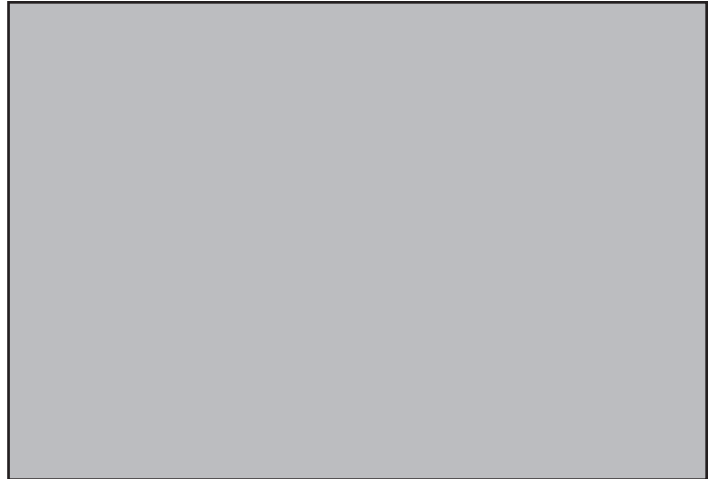
The Referee

There is a significant referee shortage in all sports, at all levels. This is partly due to poor behavior by parents/coaches. Who wants to go to work and get yelled at all the time!?? Thumbs down. If you commit to the Encourager role, then we make it easier for referees to say yes to their very important role in youth sports. US Soccer is pouring financial support into Georgia over the next several years to help develop and retain referees. We have established a Jr Referee program and mentor program at Rush Union to be a part of the solution. If each parent refereed one game a year—just one—we would eliminate our shortage. This is a vital area of need, and let's not forget this position pays too! Think you have what it takes? We need you!

The Donor

The cost of youth sports continues to increase, from the expense to play, travel, facilities maintenance, field use; and more. Established financial aid programs help support families who can't cover all the costs for their athlete, but there are other costs that

Continued on page 24 ➤



Roles Parents Can Play in Youth Sports CONTINUED

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also need to be covered to offer a comprehensive program to communities. Organizations need help from financial donors to maintain facilities, develop new programs, and minimize overhead costs to keep fees reasonable. Being a financial donor—either at an individual patron or corporate level—is a great way to contribute to the overall success of a program and attract new members.

The Everything Elser

Coach, ref and team parent roles already taken in your program? Well, there are still ways for you to get involved. You're the 'Everything Elser'. And we couldn't do it without you! You attend the education meetings the organization hosts; participate in field clean-up days or do other volunteer activities that may not happen on a regular basis. You're an advocate for the program and help promote it at your local school or church. You purchase the spirit wear and represent the organization with pride! You help make

sure the volunteer coach, team parent, and referees get the thanks and recognition they deserve. You are needed!

Whatever role fits you best, or even if you are filling multiple roles, there are always ways to get involved with your local organization. Groups like Rush Union offer coaching, parent, and referee education and support. We offer many incentives to be part of our community team. Once you find your role, we wholeheartedly believe you will enjoy the youth sports experience even more! So, are you RU ready to get involved?!

We hope everyone will get involved in their local community. Together, we make a difference.

*For more information on Rush Union Soccer and our many program offerings, please visit our website
www.rushunionsoccer.org*

