

## THE PARENT/COACH – WEARING BOTH HATS

Perhaps you happened across last month's column and were inspired to coach a new U-14 Bantam team, eager to travel down the path to a World Curling Championship! If so, your team is likely to have something in common with most young curling teams – they are coached by a parent of somebody on the team. Being a coach of any successful athletic team requires a certain level skill. Being a parent/coach will certainly test those skills.

There is a fine line a parent/coach must negotiate when interacting with the team. On one end of the continuum is the coach who lavishes praise on their 'can-do-no-wrong' child, at the expense of that member's team mates. Those team mates don't feel as though they are equal partners in the sporting endeavor. As resentment builds, performance dwindles.

On the other end of the continuum is the coach who finds it far too easy to criticize their own child's performance, while treading lightly on the rest of the team. It's as if those parents know their child can't quit the family, so the verbiage doesn't have to be measured. Maybe a prerequisite for coaching youth teams should be to coach your spouse's team in a four-week boot camp of sorts, where you would quickly learn positive and encouraging ways to get your ideas across!

While it's difficult to generalize in this area, most parent/coaches are all of the above at various times – mostly in the middle, but sometimes too hard on our own kids, and other times unreasonable and/or unfair about our expectations of their team mates or the team as a whole. Parenting is tricky, coaching is tricky, and being a parent/coach adds another level of complexity to sporting competition.

The parent/coach really needs to wear two hats, one as a parent when at home and one as a coach when working with the team. Do you wonder how your team views you? Ask. You may be surprised to learn what they think.

Once on a drive home from a bonspiel, I asked the question. The skip of our team relayed the story of how she came to our house one day to return something to my daughter (her team mate) and was surprised when I answered the door. She said her first thought was, "What is my coach doing at Steph's house?"

The parent/coach in particular needs to approach criticism of their child's athletic performance constructively and cautiously. Good parent/coaches find ways to initiate needed change in a positive and encouraging way, for the benefit of the team as a whole and not segments of the team. Young people especially need their emotional gas tanks filled more often than do adults.

The Positive Coaching Alliance web site at [www.positivecoach.org](http://www.positivecoach.org) offers some great tools to help ensure that your kids' gas tanks are always full.

Good Coaching, Good Curling!

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