

# Coaching Your Own Child

**V**olunteers are essential for all clubs and there are many debates about the positives and negatives of having parents involved with their own daughter's team. The reality is that many coaches across the country are parents and therefore it is important to have awareness of some of the issues around this dynamic.

**HERE ARE THE CONES AND BALLS... BEST OF LUCK!**

Parents who coach sports perform a valuable service and most sports would not exist if parents did not volunteer. Often this happens by necessity as teams struggle to get coaches involved. The reality is that it can be a struggle for the coaches, their children, other players and at times other parents.

Many of these parents just started out attending their child's game and standing on the sideline cheering them on but in a short space of time they may have been handed a club t-shirt, a list of players, some footballs, bibs and cones and wished the best of luck. This can



be a daunting experience for someone particularly if they have never played the sport. Suddenly they are managing and coaching a group of girls with the added pressure of one of them being their own daughter.

For some parents this experience can be fantastic, the opportunity to work with their own child and for some children it is a special time with their parents. Unfortunately the opposite can also be true, it can add pressure to a child's experience of sport and cause them to disengage. So how can you make this a positive experience for everyone involved?

**THIS IS YOUR CHILD'S TIME – THEY ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON**

The child is the most important person in this scenario and the first thing a parent should do is ask them how they would feel if they got involved as a coach with their team before agreeing with anyone in the club. This is their time, their social outlet and it is important that they feel comfortable in this environment. If they are in agreement with your involvement then you need to remember that you are there as the coach and not their parent.

**HOW TO WEAR TWO HATS**

When you start to coach your child's team you are now filling two roles in their life –





individual feedback. This means you work with the other coach's daughter while they work with yours, keeping everything separate.

The concept of fairness is vitally important to make this relationship work. It can happen that a parent ends up being too hard on their own child rather than praising them too much and giving other players more time on the pitch than their own daughter.

At the opposite end of the scale is a parent who favours their own daughter all the time and gives them preferential treatment. Remember that your child and every other child can see when coaches are being unfair – either over positive or over negative. If you fall into either of these characteristics ask yourself if what you are doing is teaching your child good values and if it is encouraging them to love participating in a sport?

Being able to tell how you are interacting with your own child can be hard to tell, ask other mentors or coaches for their opinion as this is very difficult to get right all of the time.

**COACH AT THE CLUB NOT AT HOME**

Away from the pitch it is important that you then switch back into parent mode and leave the coach behind at the club. You should not talk about other players on the team to your daughter as they are their team mates and team cohesion is

essential and this could put them in difficult situations.

You may feel at times that you want to do extra training with your child to improve them and there is nothing wrong with this as it is spending extra time with your daughter but make sure this is fun and not like a training session. Kicking around in the back garden you should be wearing your parents hat. This allows your daughter to be your child at home and a player at the pitch.

**KNOWING WHEN TO LET GO**

Finally remember that your time coaching your daughter will pass quickly so make sure you are both enjoying this and winning does not get in the way. Ladies gaelic football is a wonderful avenue to help your daughter learn valuable life lessons and your role is to make sure the lessons they, and all other players, learn are positive, constructive and most importantly fun! This is not an easy task but keep talking to other mentors involved and keep your experience positive also.

Good advice is don't coach your own child forever. It is great at the younger ages but there will come a time to step away and just watch them play. Devote your time to just being a mam or dad supporting from the sidelines with no pressure and allow them to be a player with their peers without being under the eye of their parents.

you are their parent and their coach. The challenge is to be able to wear these two hats – the key is to only wear one hat at a time!

At the most basic level you want to avoid parenting during training sessions and matches and avoid coaching at home.

In order to be fair it is important that the child knows that she will be treated the same as everyone else It can be beneficial to have at least one other coach involved and even if they have a child involved you can use a 'cross over approach' when giving

