

Tom Burgdorf's
Parenting A Champion Athlete
And A Mature Young Adult

Sheltered Athletes

Athletes can be in the top ten, 11th - 20th, or last/left behind. The position of an athlete is up to them for the most part. To stay motivated and aspire to improve, the athlete needs to visit an uncomfortable place for them once in a while. The athlete who is allowed to believe that "everyone wins" will become complacent. What a terrible word for a young person, complacent. Accepting where you are without an effort to improve. Not where we want our young people to feel comfortable.

In real life, everyone doesn't win. "Just showing up" doesn't usually get you what most people want in life. To shelter these young athletes and students from the real world is not helping them grow and mature and have an accurate picture of the journey they will be on. Real-life is a challenge where the hard workers do better. Real-life is where the "prepared" young people are not surprised by situations they have never experienced. Coming in last is a very educational experience. It is a wake-up call. "Like it here? No, you don't? Then do something about it."

The wake-up call doesn't have to be a last place finish. It could be a "B" for an "A" student. It could be a missed dive for an accomplished diver. It could be allowing six runs in 3 innings for a 15 game winning pitcher. These experiences are educational. These experiences usually challenge the young person. "Don't like it here? Then do something about it."

To shelter these young people from uncomfortable experiences is to cheat them from seeing life's not so fun side. A coach who only schedules easy opponents will wind up with "big-headed, unmotivated athletes" who are a big fish in a small pond. Life usually takes most of us out into the big pond where there are talented, hardworking people trying to be excellent and get that better job or scholarship. Too much sheltering protects them for today but diminishes their vision for the future.

Young people need to stumble to learn. Young people need to get in "over their heads" at times. Young people need to evaluate themselves and say "I am fine here, or I want more." True education can come from uncomfortable situations. To shelter these young people from potentially uncomfortable situations is not good parenting, good coaching or good teaching.

Get excited when the young people challenge themselves and find themselves "uncomfortable." Go into your teaching mode. Watch them fight their way to a better place. There will soon be times when they are on their own and they are faced with a choice: be complacent or work to improve and move forward. What do you want for your child, athlete, or student?

Take the umbrella, the roof, and the security blanket away and see if they decide to come in out of the rain.

Tom Burgdorf

National Clinician

Youth Sports Coach 40+

US Army Veteran/Drill Sergeant

For more articles for Staff, Team Parents, and Team Athletes:

Visit www.gymnetsports.net. You can also follow Tom on Facebook.