

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

Youth Sports - The Drive Away

There are many purposes for our children to spend so much time in youth sports. Your sacrifices are important considerations in terms of time, money, and being away from the rest of the family. Youth sports is quite a commitment that should result in many positives in your child's life.

Is "the drive away" the ultimate goal? The drive away is that moment, in front of your house, when your now young adult packs their bags and waves and drives away. Off to college or to their first apartment near their first real job. Driving away from you and their childhood. Driving away from your umbrella of security.

Will they find their way? Will they make the right decisions. Can they exist, happily, away from your protective arms?

My career as a coach had a simple goal: get my athletes ready for the "drive away." Prepare them for the bumps in the road and be honest with them about real-life from 18 years on. All of the positives in youth sports help build excitement and especially confidence. "I can do this!" Seeing the nine-year-old attack her beam routine with control, confidence, and a belief in herself.

I cherish the moments when my athletes had a rough day because that allowed me to guide and mentor them. And then see what their reaction would be. Fall, get up? Fall, look around for help? Fall, cry? Fall and then become more determined because they wanted to learn to not fall in that situation again?

For me, youth sports isn't about the ribbons and medals, it is about far more important things. Goal setting and planning the journey of hard work to accomplish those goals. These kids need to be taught that their success is based on them, not their coaches, parents, or teachers. You train, you discuss, you impart all of your wisdom, but when that nine-year-old walks up to the plate in the last inning of the game with winning or losing on their shoulders, they are all alone.

When they drive away, they are primarily dependent upon the lessons learned at home, at school, and in the wonderful world of their youth sports experiences. Will they be taking their medals and trophies when they drive away?

You have done a great job parenting by getting your kids into youth sports. They will be a different person because of you and what you have provided for them before they drive away. Will they be disciplined? Will they have the necessary decision-making skills? Will they take care of their money? Will they work hard to be successful? Are they self-reliant?

Preparing our children to be happy and successful as they become independent of others is an excellent goal for all of us to work toward. Youth sports helps!

Can you close your eyes and see your child drive away? Will they be prepared?

How many years before your first "drive away?"

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