



ARE YOU A SLAVE TO YOUR CHILDREN'S SPORTS?

or

How much driving does it take for a parent to be a good sport?

by Susan Vogt

Sports are good.

Too much of anything (even a good thing) can be counterproductive.

How can you tell the difference?

Advantages of sports and other extra-curricular involvements for young people:

1. Broadens and deepens one's talents and experience
2. Encourages friendships
3. Teaches teamwork, cooperation, self-discipline
4. Balances the academic side on a student's life
5. Provides an opportunity for success for those who might not shine academically or socially
6. Builds community at school, church, and the neighborhood
(Provides opportunities for parents to meet and talk with other parents at games, etc.)
7. Physical or interactive activity minimizes more passive entertainment like TV or video games

Disadvantages:

1. Some teams/coaches stress a win at any cost philosophy (overly competitive)
2. Some parents/coaches use unsporty behavior (rudeness, interfering with the referee, etc.)
3. Can create a too busy and scheduled child
"A certain amount of boredom is necessary for creativity to flourish."
4. Can steal valuable family time
5. Can create hectic and guilty parents for not being able to always be there.

Guidelines/Tips:

1. Check out your student's coaches. Does he or she:
 - Care for all the players, not just the stars
 - Teach basics, not unethical techniques
 - Model respect, good winning and losing skills
 - Have healthy balanced family lives themselves
 - Use healthy motivational techniques (not degrading, punitive, unduly competitive, etc.)
2. Decide on a reasonable number of sports/activities per student
Many parents use the rule of thumb*:
 - No more than one sport a season (i.e., soccer, basketball, baseball)
 - No more than one academic involvement at a time (school clubs, scouts, etc.)
 - No more than one cultural involvement at a time (music, art, dance, etc.)
 - Sports/activities should not interfere with priorities of family, study, and faith
 - Younger children may try out a variety of sports before focusing more on one or two in their teen years.

*Exceptions can be made to the above if the activity does not involve chauffeuring, i.e. the child can walk or bus to the activity or it is after school and an extra trip is not required

3. Parent Involvement:

- Make friends with the other parents so carpooling and helping each other out is easier. This also builds community.
- Parents should support their child's involvement but this doesn't mean you have to be at every game. Share responsibility with other parents you trust.

4. Be hesitant to get involved in activities that don't respect family dinner or worship time