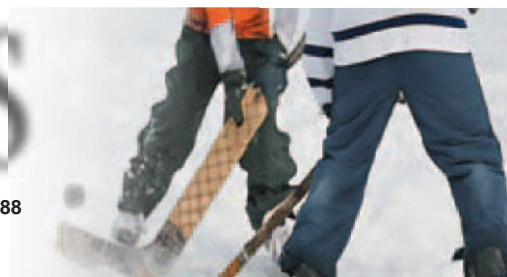


# SPORTS

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## Parent-Coaches fill a critical role in the system

Has anyone ever got this phone call: “Would you be willing to coach your child’s team this year? Without a coach the children won’t be able to play.”



What usually happens to my brother is that his wife answers that phone call and puts forward her husband’s name.

This is a running joke in our family. However, it has become clear to me that this occurs not only in our family, but in many families across Canada. In fact, statistics say that up to 90 per cent of youth sports teams have at least one parent on the bench. Quite often a mom or dad will step up to the plate to coach because no one else will lead 15 six-year-olds through the next 10 weeks of practices and games.

### Tara Chisolm Training Matters

Reality starts to sink in a couple days away from that first practice when my brother starts to panic, realizing he never has played organized soccer in his life.

Again, he is not alone.

Minor sports organizations are getting better at providing resources to their volunteer coaches. A lot of these resources are based on the Long Term Athlete Development model which helps coaches to find age-appropriate activities for their athletes. The research behind this model is extensive, and brings in the idea that there are certain fundamental movement skills that children will need to develop along the way to becoming a well-rounded athlete.

Another thing I often remind my brother of is that many minor sports organizations have policies in place for specific age divisions. Some of these include items about the weather and safety procedures whereas others will be more specific to the game itself. One that comes up often in youth sports is playing time. Does your league have something written about equal playing time or is that something you as a coach implement when talking at your first parent meeting?

That parent meeting is one of the most crucial part of having a positive season in youth sport. In my experience, the most successful youth sport coaches clearly define their expectations of the players, parents and themselves that first meeting. From here on out, whenever a hiccup occurs in the season everyone can turn back to the items discussed in that first meeting for clarity. Even as a national team coach, I still use the initial player’s meeting as my holy grail of how I coach and why I make the decisions that I do.

We all know that youth sports can go a little sideways at times and it can really deter volunteers from wanting to step into that coaching role. However, we need you and most importantly the kids need you. If they see that positive role model who is trying their best to teach appropriate skills, looking out for their safety and best interests, and being open and honest with them, I can only imagine what our next generation of coaches will look like!



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