



# Why parents are the secret weapon in sporting success

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Having spent countless hours learning what drives sporting success there's a very strong argument that...

*Parents are often a better predictor for how children might grow their potential than the children themselves. Behind most top performers you'll find encouraging, stimulating and demanding parents*

The Gold Mine Effect; Rasmus Ankersen

I think we all find it easy to be encouraging but what can parents do to be *stimulating* and *demanding*? Elite sport is very unforgiving and we know the support athletes receive when they're young has a massive impact on what they achieve in future.

I work with many sports and my message is always clear. Engage more with the parents, they are crucial to success. Why? Because in sport much of the learning happens BETWEEN competition and training sessions when athletes reflect on what just happened, why it happened and what they could do to make it better next time. I have 3 sporty kids and learned very quickly that they *sometimes* need a wee reminder (*stimulating*) to take time to reflect and learn.

Parents spend hours ferrying kids around and are in a great position to help (*demanding*) them make this a habit. You are NOT their coach (even if you are, you still need to be their parent as well!). Your job is to support their learning by helping them to reflect and learn and the best way to do this is by asking great questions.





And here's my top tip on how to ask great questions. DON'T focus on the outcome. Too often the 1st question parents ask is, did you win/score/get a medal etc. When athletes are young, results are much less important than developing the skills they need to be good in FUTURE. So as a parent don't ask about the result. Instead ask questions like...

- What have you been working on today and why is that important?
- I know you've been working on your technique, how did that go in the competition today?
- I know you're disappointed so what will you differently next time?

It can be very tempting to start by telling kids what you think. Resist the temptation! Questions help them build an understanding of WHY they performed as they did and they can use this knowledge to help improve in future. If you're a parent, practice asking great questions – and as you practice, don't forget to take time to reflect on what you could do better next time!



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