BOOK REVIEW

The High School Sports Parent: Developing Triple-Impact Competitors


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68 pages, $10.95 USD

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High school sports have grown in many ways (e.g., the number of student athletes, the level of competition, the intensity of games, media exposure, etc). Society and media has influenced the public to focus on tournament results at all sport levels, utilizing high school sports to develop outstanding people. Parents expect overarching results from their child’s sport performance, which can create extra stress and confliction at home. The author, Jim Thompson, Founder and Executive Director of the not-for-profit organization “Positive Coaching Alliance” at Stanford University has established the mission to transform the culture of youth sports to a positive, character-building, and balanced learning experience.

The purpose of this book is to advocate Thompson’s model of sports parenting “the Second-Goal Parent” to all the parents who are involved in youth sports. It also promotes his mission of “Positive Coaching Alliance” and his founding spirit.

The projected audience of this book is parents of different backgrounds who are involved in youth sports; therefore, the author chose not to contain heavy academic theories and complex terminology associated with sport psychology. Instead, he correctly uses casual language to present the concept and practice examples to create an easy-to-read handbook for parents.

The sequence of the chapters is carefully organized and includes an introduction of the Second-Goal Parent and the Triple-Impact Competitor, briefs the current high school sports issues, fills up the athlete’s emotional tank, and addresses the importance of sportsmanship. In addition, six case studies are provided in the appendix. Each chapter is arranged with a clear core concept and includes questions and answers that parents can easily utilize to explore their son’s or/and daughter’s sporting experience and thoughts.

The concepts of the book are simple to understand and can be implemented by using different techniques, such as asking good questions and giving constructive answers to guide the high school athletes through a positive learning experience on and off the court. The authors do an excellent job of developing examples to exhibit the differences between negative and positive feedback, providing suggestions to parents on what to say in various
circumstances that might encourage young athletes as a second-goal parent. Parents can easily pick up the concept and apply it at home. This is the strength of this book. Although the author comes from America’s youth sport culture, and considering various cultural and high sport settings, the examples can still be applied in other countries.

The author offers tables and charts throughout to present concepts. For example, page 19 shows “what can parents do?” to exemplify principles, and page 20 offers tables to outline signs of eating disorders and steroid use. Page 41 has a table that shows common tank drainers, while page 68 displays a blank table to identify goals for parents and athletes. Unfortunately, the titles and numbers of some tables are lacking and could provide better assistance for the audience.

In summary, this is a recommended book that is easy to read. It should be considered by all parents and coaches involved in youth sports.