

NOTES TO DAD

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Dads and Sports

About this time of year, it seems that everyone's attention turns to sports. Even before your child was born, you may have dreamed about him or her as a star athlete.

Today, more than ever, school-age children are participating in organized sports — sometimes two and three sports. There is growing concern about the impact that overly competitive sports can have upon the developing child. Studies of stress in young athletes suggest that those who are constantly pushed by parents and coaches run the risk of losing all interest in sports caused by the anxiety and stress associated with competition.

Not only can you see symptoms of emotional stress, like nausea,

headaches, lack of energy to mention a few; but two other dangers are associated with sports burnout. A young athlete who is under constant stress to perform is susceptible to injury. A more long-term danger is that children who burn out on sports early in life will be at risk for health problems in adulthood due to their avoidance of exercise.

So what can you as a dad do to prevent these negative effects of sports competition? First of all, try to take a positive approach. Never publicly criticize or embarrass your child or anyone else's. Praise your child for the positive aspects of his or her performance. Children are much more likely to enjoy sports if they feel they meet their parents' expectations. By praising their progress, you are not

only helping them improve their physical skills but also their attitude and sportsmanship.

Make your expectations realistic. Too many parents expect an Olympic champion; remember very few children reach this level of performance. Instead, use sports as a way to teach your child about limits and strengths, goal setting, and the importance of sports as a means of relaxation.

Don't use your child to relive your own athletic days or to fulfill unmet athletic goals. Instead, encourage your child to set his or her own sporting goals. Don't assume just because you were a star football player in high school that your child will enjoy the same sport; provide a variety of sports for your child to try. Growing bodies need to develop a range of skills. Providing your child with a sampling of sports activities will help to round-out his or her physical, social, and mental development. There is always time for specialization later in adolescence.

I spoke with a couple of fathers around the soccer field to ask their opinions of how a father can best support a child in his or her athletic endeavors. One pointed out that he felt it was important to attend as many of his son's games as possible and to show an interest in all the sports he plays. This dad also pointed out, "I try to teach my

son not to place the blame of a loss on officials or actions of other players. He needs to accept the rulings of officials and take responsibility for his own actions."

Another father felt sports was a great place to teach a child about setting goals. Even though a child may never become a star player, he can learn to set realistic goals and work hard to achieve them; he can take a lot of pride in scoring or finishing a race a few seconds faster. This father said, "After the game we talk about how he (the son) did achieving his game goal. It gives us something positive to talk about, regardless of whether they won or lost the game, and focuses us on his growth as a play-

er." Finally, it is important to match your child to the sport. A self-motivated child may be more suited for individual sports such as running or swimming. Some other children need a more team-oriented sport like soccer. Take the time to match your child's temperament and interest to the right sport.

Whatever you choose, be a positive model for your children by enjoying sports yourself. Play with, but don't compete with, your child. Biking, hiking, and catch are a few recreation alternatives to competitive sports that can provide an opportunity for the family to play together. Have fun!

Belleville Farm To Be Featured On Television

BELLEVILLE (Mifflin Co.) — A Belleville farm is slated to be included in the upcoming WPSX special, "Farming From the Heart." Hameau Farm in the Big Valley is a working dairy farm, milking 36 registered Ayrshire cows, and more! For six weeks every summer it opens its barn doors for girls, ages 8-12. This unique program, a farm camp, includes feeding baby calves, gathering eggs, even milking goats, as part of its morning activities.

The girls (campers) come from major metropolitan areas, such as New York City, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and Baltimore, Md., to be farmers for two, four or six weeks. The counseling staff, made up of young women from a variety of agricultural and non-agricultural experiences/backgrounds, is a

large percentage international. Countries represented have been Australia, Scotland, Kenya, England, Romania, Spain, Germany, Denmark, Malta and the Czech Republic.

"I have been blessed," said Audrey Gay Rodgers, owner director. "so many people and personalities have fed these calves and milked these goats. It's amazing how global, yet unifying, agriculture really is."

The confidences that are gained by her young charges is equally gratifying to Rodgers. The development of confidence is a motivating impetus as she plans for the future of the farm and its various programs.

Entering its fifth season, Hameau Farm in the Big Valley truly "raises more than just cows!"

Farming From the Heart

see it on any of the following stations:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| WPSX (State College) | Sept. 20 and 21, 8 p.m. |
| WYBE (Philadelphia) | Sept. 22 and 23, 8 p.m. |
| WQLN (Erie) | Sept. 20 and 21, 8 p.m. |
| WVIA (Scranton) | Sept. 22, 9-11 p.m. |
| WLVT (Bethlehem) | Sept. 24 and Oct. 1, 10 p.m. |
| WITF (Harrisburg) | Sept. 17 and 24, 9 p.m. |
| WHYY (Phila.) | Sept. 19, 2-4 p.m. |

The special is in two parts and poignantly depicts the diversity of Pennsylvania agriculture. Hameau Farm in the Big Valley is in Part 1.

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