

Frequently Asked Questions

Note: The questions and answers in this section have been taken from “**99 Answers For The Sport Parent**” by Mel Roustino. Some additional questions that are common to the Ephrata Area School District Athletic Department have all been added. Its intent is to offer answers to some of the frequently asked questions in athletics in order to enable parents to enjoy their role and have the opportunity to provide their children with the experiences they all anticipate.

1. Throughout elementary school my son has struggled academically. He wishes to participate in middle school sports. Should I limit his play to insure better grades?

There is a huge misconception centered on sports participation and academic success. Sport demands much time and energy expenditure. Some people assume that the amount of practice time reduces time for academic study. The invalid assumption is that practice time would be devoted to studies... that “if my child weren’t practicing he would be studying.” Probably not.

State high school associations across America have academic guidelines in place that speak to minimum standards of grade achievement for the sport participant. The student’s grades are monitored during his sport season. Coaches are in a position to alert parents of grade woes and also obtain faculty or peer tutoring for the struggling athlete. Due to close scrutiny and your son’s desire to stay eligible you may notice improved academic grades.

2. Why won’t my daughter’s high school coach allow her and other players to ride home with parents from out of town games?

There are legal, social and team ramifications. The school event calling for school transportation places a certified employee of the school district in charge and responsible for all students to arrive safely to and from the event.

Liability exists for the parents when friends of their child also ride along from events. Usually, the request is made by parents who have financial means to attend out of town games and the transportation becomes a socio-economic statement. The wealthy kids get private transportation and the poor kids ride the bus.

Perhaps the most important reason for players to ride the bus to and from contest is found in the significant learning experience. These youngsters comprise a team. They prepare together. They perform together. They win or lose together... and they interact and process as they ride the bus together.

There are circumstances that arise that should permit a student to ride with his parents. Those situations are rare and limited.

3. Isn't it unfair and unwise to play a freshmen or a sophomore ahead of a senior on the varsity team?

The selection of team members is based upon who has the skills to make the greatest contribution. It is not based upon age, social standing or parent interference.

In team sports, we must keep in mind that there are various skills needed for various roles. In Individual sports the statistics dictate much in the coach's decision. The years I coached cross-country, I was never uncertain which seven runners would be entered in the meet. The stop watch the day before told me.

Few observers would advocate that each year the team must be comprised of seniors. If your son were the sophomore with clearly superior skills, would you advocate that the older players get selected? The above question has been asked many time... and it is always the parent of the senior.

4. What are the pros and cons of "equal playing time" and at what age is it no longer an issue?

Children at the introductory level of sports programs get equal opportunity and approximately equal playing time. By the time they reach the middle school age, the equal-playing time debate should end. Some children have more natural ability and some practice more intently to develop athletic abilities. Those students with superior skills are rewarded with more playing time. There is a reason for keeping score. In the process of assessing capabilities, all students will not receive the same academic grades; all students will not receive the same amount of stage time in plays; and all athletes will not receive an equal amount of playing time in sports.

5. What are the benefits of sport participation as claimed by sport advocates?

We have all heard of the benefits of participation in sports. Any activity that creates a situation for children to interact with others, help build character and prepare participants to meet life challenges should be encouraged. Athletics provides the opportunity for many good things to take place, but these things are not automatic. The rewards occur when the individual sees the gap closing between present abilities and their potential. They then recognize the benefits of commitment, of following instructions, practicing skill development, working hard to achieve a goal, playing by the rules, self discipline and role-playing as it relates to the needs of the group. The greatest outcome from participating in athletics is the blueprint it leaves on the individual to follow in living experiences beyond the athletic arenas. The athletic

experience will encourage an individual to become a more involved citizen and a more well-rounded adult who seeks to answer the larger questions: "How can I help others, and what can I do for my family, my church and my community?"

6. Will participation in sports help my child's self-esteem?

There is no definite answer to this question. Self-esteem is defined as "pride in oneself... self respect". When an athlete works hard to develop a skill and can successfully apply it, she develops self-esteem. She feels good about herself and her accomplishments. In another situation, if an athlete does little to develop his skills, makes constant errors, and is embarrassed with his play, it will be unlikely for him to develop self-esteem. Self-esteem comes at a steep price. There's no easy or magical way to acquire it. It's ultimately up to teach athlete to determine for himself how or even if he is to attain his personal self-esteem.

7. Does playing multiple sports help an athlete during recruiting?

"The first questions I'll ask about a kid are, 'What other sports does he play? What does he do? What are his positions? Is he a big hitter in baseball? Is he a pitcher? Does he play hoops?' All of these things are important to me. I hate that kids don't play three sports in high school. I think that they should play year-round and get every bit of it that they can through that experience. I really, really don't favor kids having to specialize in one sport. Even here, I want to be the biggest proponent of two-sport athletes on the college level. I want guys that are so special athletically, and so competitive, that they can compete in more than one sport."

University of Southern California Head Football Coach, Pete Carroll