



Guidelines for Parents Who Want to Coach with Team T3Multisports

What are the right reasons for a parent wanting to coach? Some good reasons are love of children, love of the sport, genuine concern for and willingness to work hard to help them improve as athletes and as young people, unselfish desire to help team grow. What are the wrong reasons for parents wanting to coach? First, the opportunity to complete their personal agendas for their children. This agenda may not match up with the coach's long-term objectives for the same child. Second, an opportunity to prove the coach is wrong will inevitably create a battle.

What does it take to become a parent coach with T3Multisports?

1. Number 1 and most important: A parent-coach must be an approved volunteer of the club and be directly supervised by the head coach. Our employees and volunteers have standards. All volunteers must complete the USA Triathlon's Registered Triathlon Leader's Manual within 1 month of designation as volunteer coach. In addition, they must be at practice on time and perform certain duties as required by the coach. While the Director may technically be the coach/employer, the head coach must be the immediate supervisor. The head coach must interview a perspective parent coach; the parent coach reports to the head coach. The Director or head coach has the authority to dismiss the parent coach if necessary.

2. With authority comes responsibility. The head coach is responsible for providing training to the parent coach. This training should be specific to the club's policies, specific to the head coach's philosophy, and in general, the larger body of coaching knowledge, for example mechanics, physiology, training, teaching skills, working with parents, and motivation. The head coach can do this through a combination of staff training, home study assignments, or sending parent coaches to clinics. There is nothing overly complex in coaching knowledge but at the same time there are many ways to get the same thing done. For example there is no one perfect style in swimming, cycling form or

running technique for triathlon. Do not look at an Olympian as the model for technique; think you understand that style and then forge ahead trying to make every 8 year old look exactly like that model. It is important to understand the many possibilities and apply what works best with each athlete. This is all done under the philosophy of the Head Coach.

3. The parent must buy into the T3Multisports and the head coach's philosophies and acknowledge his or her experience and expertise. If not, we are inviting disaster.

4. The parent coach must not coach his or her own child –at least not until the parent coach has earned the trust and respect of the head coach, the athletes, and the director for his genuine commitment to the program without a personal agenda for his own children. Even after that point it is questionable whether the parent and child interact in a way that allows for coaching to fully and effectively take place. In coaching there are times for critically evaluating technique, performance, a workout or a behavior in a coach athlete manner.

When children have the habit of ignoring Mom or Dad, which tends to happen more frequently beginning at about age 11 and 12, the coach-athlete interaction breaks down. In some cases parents can coach their children, but rarely.

In most cases the natural growth and growing independence of children makes it difficult for parent to critically coach them. This is an area will tread very carefully.

5. The parent coach is subject to the very same evaluation as all other staff.

6. On the matter of judgment: Much of what a head coach decides is based on intuition and judgment, which are based in a large part on past experience. There are two things in a healthy relationship between parent and coach or between assistant coach and coach or between parent coach and coach:

First there should not be an aggressive challenge to a judgment call, and second, the head coach should be able to process a question put forth by a parent, parent coach, or other staff without becoming defensive.

Adapted from "News for Swim Parents." Used with permission.