

# **LET THEM LOVE IT**

*A Champion's Honest Guide for Today's Sports Parent*

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# Contents

## A Note to the Parent Holding This Book

# A Note to the Parent Holding This Book

If you picked up this book, I already know two things about you. You love your kid, and you are a little worried. Maybe more than a little. The game has changed since you were young, and nobody handed you a manual for it. The pressure starts earlier. Travel costs more. The highlight clips never stop. And somewhere underneath all of it is a quiet question you may not have said out loud: am I doing this right?

I want to take that weight off your shoulders, because I have spent my whole life inside this world. I was a kid who loved a basketball more than just about anything. I became one of the best scorers the game has seen, and then I spent the next chapter of my life building the Teddy Dupay Basketball Academy and putting tens of thousands of kids through sessions. I have watched what works and what wrecks a young athlete. I have seen the parent who got it right and did not even realize it, and the parent who meant well and pushed the love right out of the room.

This is not a book about raising a pro. Most kids will not play pro sports, and that was never the point. This is a book about raising a person — using the game as the classroom. The confidence, the habits, the character, the courage. Those are the trophies that last. The scoreboard is just the place we see how effective our practice has been.

I am going to be honest with you, the same way I am honest with the kids on my court. I am a man of faith, and you will feel that in these pages. I am not going to drag you across any finish line, and I am not going to beg you to agree with me. I am going to give you the truth as I have lived it, and let you decide. My promise is simple: by the end, you will know how to approach youth sports in a way that protects the one thing that matters most — your child's love of the thing they do.

***Purpose driven. Passion fueled. Everything good is built on top of those two words.***

Let's get back to the basics.

## Chapter 1

# The Question You're Really Asking

Every parent eventually asks me the same question, usually quietly, off to the side, where the other parents can't hear. "How do I know if my child is really good? Or are they only really good in my eyes because I love them?"

It is a brave question, and I respect it every time. Here is my honest answer, and it is not about height, speed, or the size of their hands. There is a simple test. When you can take away "shooting hoops" — or swimming, or the piano, or whatever their thing is — and use it as leverage when they misbehave, and it actually stings them to lose it, that is a very good sign they have what it takes. The passion is real. They are not doing it for you. They are doing it for them.

People want me to talk about potential. Potential, someday, will be a vertical jump and a wingspan. Those measurables matter later. Right now, today, the number one key indicator you want to see is the passion to play and the passion to practice. That is the target. If your child loves the game and genuinely wants to get better at it, you are close to the bullseye.

And if they don't love it? Then adjust the approach immediately. I mean that. Not next season. Not after this tournament you already paid for. Immediately. A child who has lost the love is telling you something, and the worst thing a parent can do is turn up the heat to force a flame that has already gone out.

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Let me tell you what passion looks like, so you can recognize it. The kids who make it — every single one of them — share the same childhood memories. If you asked them as a child, "What do you do for fun?", Our immediate answers were, "Practice shooting," and "Playing imaginary Game 7's in the driveway, hitting the buzzer-beater to cut down the nets." Nobody made them do that. The gym was not a chore. It was the reward.

If shooting by yourself is a chore for your child, the dream is going to be very hard. I cannot work out for them, and neither can you. The kids who love it have fun practicing alone. That is the whole secret, and it cannot be faked. So before you spend another dollar or drive another mile, watch your child when no one is making them do anything. What do they reach for? That is your answer.

I am not telling you it can't happen if the love isn't there yet. Anything is possible, and love can be grown if we feed it the right way — which is most of what this book is

about. I am telling you to stop guessing about talent and start watching for joy. Joy is the talent that turns into all the others.

## Chapter 2

# Winning Is Fun

I am going to say something that gets misunderstood, so stay with me. Winning is fun. I believe that with everything in me. But the reason winning is fun is the part everyone skips.

We train so hard because winning is fun. And then games become easy — not because the opponent is weak, but because you will never be outworked. That is the order of operations, and most families get it backwards. They chase the winning first and wonder why their kid is miserable. The Winning is the dessert. The work is the meal. When a kid falls in love with the work, the winning takes care of itself, and the whole thing feels like play.

***Train so hard because winning is fun. Games are easy because you will never be outworked.***

People who have that mindset will succeed at anything they do, long after the last whistle of their last game. That is why I care about it so much. I am not building scorers. I am building people who know how to want something and go get it.

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Now, here is the hard part for us as parents. If winning is so important to your child that they lose their cool, whine, or cry when they lose, that is not automatically a problem — but it is a fork in the road. A competitive fire is a gift. The question is whether they love to practice enough that more practice does not feel like a punishment. Because the answer to a tough loss is never less effort or more pressure. The answer is more reps that they actually enjoy.

A child who hates losing but loves practicing is a champion in the making. A child who hates losing but also hates practicing is a child headed for heartbreak, and they will blame themselves for it. Our job is to make sure the love of the work is bigger than the fear of the loss. When it is, losing becomes information instead of identity.

So celebrate effort louder than outcome. When your kid comes off the floor, the first question out of your mouth should not be “Did you win?” or “How many did you score?” Try, “Did you have fun? What did you figure out today?” You will be amazed how fast a child relaxes into greatness when they stop performing for the scoreboard and start playing for the joy of it.

## Chapter 3

# You Can't Drag Them Across the Finish Line

There is a line every sports parent has to learn, and almost everyone learns it the hard way. Pushing a child to start, and even pulling them across the finish line, is important and necessary. Dragging or begging someone to try hard is never going to work.

Read that again, because the difference between those two things is the difference between a kid who thrives and a kid who quits. Push and pull are about belief — you believe in them more than they believe in themselves for a moment, and you lend them your faith until theirs catches up. Drag and beg are about control — you have decided you want it more than they do, and now you are trying to force it. Kids can feel the difference instantly, even when we can't.

So how do you know which one you're doing? Watch their enthusiasm. When a child's enthusiasm gets stale, when they go standoffish to hustle, that is not the moment to lay on more pressure. That is the moment to change the game.

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Here is exactly what I do when the spark dims, and it works on the court and at the kitchen table. We stop trying to fix everything at once and we pick one thing. One single move. I call it the bread and butter. We are going to develop one signature move and we are going to go a little crazy with enthusiasm over it — every gain and every mistake.

And I talk to them the entire time. “You're so close.” “Keep going, you could never stop now.” “It could happen any day. It might be the very next try.” “Do you believe you'll learn it? Then one of these times — maybe the very next one — will be the time you get it.” Over and over and over and over again. That is not cheerleading for the sake of noise. It is teaching a child that effort and belief are connected, and that the breakthrough is always closer than it feels.

Notice what that does. It shrinks an overwhelming mountain down to one climbable step. It replaces “get better” — which is vague and exhausting — with “land this one move,” which is specific and winnable. Confidence is built on small, real victories, not big speeches. Give your child something they can actually conquer this week, and stand there losing your mind with joy when they conquer it. That is how you reignite a stale flame without ever once begging.

## Chapter 4

# Confidence Comes From Competence

If I could tattoo one sentence on every sports parent's heart, it would be this: confidence comes from competence. You cannot talk a child into confidence. You cannot buy it, post it, or praise it into existence. It is the natural result of getting genuinely good at something hard.

That is why empty praise backfires. When we tell a child they are amazing at something they know they have not earned, they don't feel more confident — they feel more anxious, because now they have to protect a reputation that isn't real. Real confidence is quiet. It comes from a kid looking down at their own two hands and knowing, from a thousand reps, that they can do the thing. Build the competence, and the confidence shows up on its own and never leaves.

***Confidence comes from competence. You build the skill, and the belief is the prize inside.***

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This leads to one of the most important distinctions I teach, for the players and for their parents. Character is who you are. Reputation is what they say about you. Pay attention to both, and take great care of both, but use wisdom about which one you serve. When you chase reputation — the rankings, the offers, the comments, the other parents' opinions — you hand the steering wheel of your child's life to strangers.

I learned this the slow way. For a long time, my biggest fear was playing a game against someone who overestimated me, because I always wanted to prove I was right to believe in myself so strongly. I was too concerned with what "they" were saying, using it for my own validation. I know now that was misguided. It is better to be happy than right. No respect? No problem. The work was the point all along, not the applause for the work.

Teach your child to be different if they want to make a difference. The crowd is loud and the crowd is usually wrong about what matters. A child anchored in character — who they are when no one is watching — is unshakable. A child anchored in reputation is at the mercy of the last thing anybody said about them. One of those kids sleeps well. Help yours be that one.

## Chapter 5

# The Most Important Skill Is Listening

Ask any kid to name the most important skill in their sport and you will hear the obvious answers. In basketball it's shooting, rebounding, ball-handling, passing, defense. They are all wrong, and so are most adults.

The most important skill in basketball — and the most important skill in life — is listening. If you are not a great listener, you can never be great at anything basketball related, and to be honest, you will struggle to be great at anything at all. Everything I have to teach, every shortcut earned over a lifetime, is useless if it bounces off a kid who is only waiting for their turn to talk.

And here is the distinction I drill, because it is everything. Listen, don't just hear. Hearing is passive; the sound arrives. Listening is active; the meaning lands. A child has to be present and mature enough, right in that moment, to truly take something in — otherwise they won't get it, and some opportunities to learn don't come around twice.

***Listen, don't just hear. Be present, or you will miss the very thing you came for.***

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So why am I putting a chapter about listening in a book for parents? Two reasons. First, because we have to model it. A child learns how to listen by being listened to. If your kid talks and you are half on your phone, you are teaching them exactly how much attention a person deserves. The way you listen to them is the way they will listen to their coaches, their teachers, and one day their own children.

Second, because protecting your child's ability to listen is one of the great jobs of modern parenting. We have raised kids in a world engineered to shatter attention into a thousand pieces. The buzz, the scroll, the endless noise. A young athlete who can stand still, lock in, and absorb a single instruction completely has a superpower that most adults have lost. Guard that ability like it's gold, because it is. The kid who can truly listen can be taught anything. The kid who can't will struggle, no matter how talented they are.

## Chapter 6

# The Bread-and-Butter Move

I told you earlier about picking one move when the spark dims. Now I want to show you the whole philosophy underneath it, because it is how real mastery is built — in sports, in music, in school, in anything.

Greatness is not built by being a little bit good at everything. It is built by being unstoppable at one thing, and then adding the next one thing, and the next. We develop a bread-and-butter move and we go to work on it. We imitate other people's signature moves first, on purpose. That does two things. It forces a child to decide what kind of player they want to be, and it forces them to start looking for tendencies — their own and everybody else's. While they are laser-focused on hunting for the right move, everything else they see gets cataloged and filed away in that sponge of a brain. They are learning far more than the one move.

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Let me tell you how deep this goes, because it changed how I played. I practiced specific shots from specific spots on the floor that I would never use — unless I happened to end up in that exact spot in trouble. Some moves only live in some places. So I would master a shot from one strange angle and keep it in the bag, untouched, for the one day I might need it.

I got so good at it that I would get myself into trouble on purpose, just so I could take the shot. A team would trap me at half court, and instead of panicking I would calmly pull up and shoot from places nobody believed was possible — because I had made that exact shot a million times alone in an empty gym. What looked impossible to everyone else was routine to me. By the end, there was no spot on the floor where an opponent could do anything about it.

***Master one thing so completely that what looks impossible to everyone else is routine to you.***

Now hear the parenting lesson, because it is the real treasure. Mastery is built in private, rep by boring rep, long before it ever shows up in public. The crowd sees the impossible shot in the game. They never see the thousand lonely afternoons that made it ordinary. So when your child wants to quit because they are not great yet, remember: you are not watching a kid who lacks talent. You are watching a kid who has not yet done the quiet, repetitive, unglamorous work that turns hard into easy.

Your job is to protect those lonely afternoons and make them feel like an adventure, not a sentence.

And by the way — the actual mechanics of scoring? That is the easy part. I can teach the science of it in twenty minutes. Scoring is a science, obvious once you see it. The hard part, the part that takes a lifetime, is the inner work: the listening, the patience, the courage, the character. That is the part I am really teaching, and it is the part your child will use long after they stop playing.

## Chapter 7

# Events, Response, Outcomes

I want to give you a tool you can use tonight, at dinner, the next time something goes wrong. I call it E-R-O: Events, Response, Outcomes. It is three words, and it can change a child's entire relationship with adversity.

Here is the idea. An event happens — a bad call, a missed shot, a benching, a rude kid, a hard test. The event is not in your control. What is fully in your control is your response. And it is the response, not the event, that determines the outcome. Most people live as if the event controls the outcome directly, so they spend their lives reacting, blaming, and feeling powerless. The whole secret of a strong life is realizing there is a gap between what happens to you and what you do about it — and you own that gap completely.

***Events. Response. Outcomes. You do not control the event. You always control the response.***

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This connects to something I believe to my core: thoughts are things. If your imagination can conceive it, you can achieve it — and the conceiving always happens before the achieving. Control what you can control, and one of the very few things any of us truly controls is the thought we choose to think next. A child who learns this stops being a victim of the scoreboard and starts being the author of the next play.

So how do you teach it? You narrate it. When your child gets a bad call, you do not rush to rescue them or rage at the referee. You say, quietly, “Okay — that’s the event. It’s done, and you can’t change it. So what’s your response?” You make them the hero of the gap. Over time, that simple question rewires how they meet everything hard, in sports and out. They stop asking “Why did this happen to me?” and start asking “What am I going to do now?” That single shift is worth more than any skill in the playbook.

And model it yourself, especially in the car ride home — the most dangerous classroom in youth sports. The way you respond to your child’s bad game teaches them how to respond to life’s bad games. If a missed shot ruins your night, it will ruin theirs. If a missed shot is just an event you respond to with calm and love, you have taught them the most valuable lesson of the whole season without running a single drill.

## Chapter 8

# Build a Culture of Courage at Home

Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is the commitment to overcome it. It does not mean you are not afraid; it means you confront the fear instead of shying away from it. I have always pictured courage as tiny pieces of fear glued together — you battle it in small, constant amounts until the battling becomes who you are.

Your home is where your child's courage is built or quietly starved. Not the gym, not the field — the home. The way fear and failure are treated at your kitchen table becomes the way your child treats fear and failure for the rest of their life. So I want to hand you five ways to build a culture of courage, the same five principles I use to build brave teams and organizations, translated for a family.

- Set scary standards. Safe goals are set by safe leaders with safe visions. Give your child a goal big enough to scare them a little, and you will raise someone who knows what it feels like to overcome fear and chase something that matters.
- Allow for failure. The road to success is paved with failures. Let your child fail — even encourage it as they reach. A home where failure is allowed is a home where big tries are possible. A home where failure is punished raises a child who only attempts what is safe.
- Reward innovation. Trying it their own way requires risk, and risk-taking makes a child bold. When your kid attempts something creative — even if it flops — celebrate the boldness, not just the result.
- Pursue the right opportunities. Not every risk is a good one. Be disciplined. Help your child aggressively chase a few things that truly fit them, and teach them the power of saying no — often — to everything else.
- Learn to delegate — which for a parent means learning to let go. Entrusting your child with real responsibility, and letting them lead their own journey, is one of the most courageous things you will ever do. If you want a child who is brave, you have to give them the chance to lead.

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Look closely at that list and you will see it is really a list about you. Every one of those points asks the parent to tolerate discomfort — the discomfort of a big goal, a public failure, a messy experiment, a firm no, a loosened grip. Your child's courage

grows in exact proportion to how much fear you, the parent, are willing to sit with. That is the hard, holy work of it.

I draw my own courage from my faith, and I am not shy about that. The people I admire most needed enormous courage to answer a calling bigger than themselves — leaving home for a place they weren't sure existed, standing up when everyone else sat down, leading when they were outnumbered. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid and do not panic. Whatever you draw your strength from, draw deeply, because raising a brave kid will require more of it than you expect — and it is the best investment you will ever make.

## Chapter 9

# Habits and the Laws of Success

Here is a sentence worth taping to the bathroom mirror: “What you do sometimes, you do all the time”. Habits are not what you do on the big day. Habits are what you do on the ordinary days that quietly decide the big day for you.

We obsess over talent and ignore habits, and we have it exactly backwards. Character, self-confidence, and a positive mindset are not gifts some kids are born with. They are the results of good habits, repeated until they become automatic. The trouble is that good habits are mostly not being taught anymore — and some kids are learning the exact opposite, picking up bad habits that are painful to break later. Breaking a bad habit takes a definitive decision followed by constant, deliberate self-correction. Building a good habit early is a thousand times easier. So we build early, often, and on purpose.

***What you do sometimes, you do all the time.***

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Years ago I wrote down everything I would want a young person to know — the laws of success as I have lived them. I want to share the heart of it with you, because these are the habits worth handing down, far more than any jump shot:

Be strong. Be tough. Persevere, go the extra mile, and dedicate yourself. Treat others with kindness and respect, because that is how you earn kindness and respect back. There are no guarantees, so hold yourself accountable and keep a strict no-excuses policy with yourself. Surround yourself with people who have goals — something to gain and something to lose — and avoid negative influences at all costs. Eat properly, sleep properly, think properly, and train properly.

You will need exposure to real situations to be ready for real situations. You will need guidance, education, friends, and — yes — failures, because sometimes falling flat on your face is the only way to truly learn. Just don’t make the same mistake twice; the second time, the lesson gets expensive. Find people smarter than you and study them. Find people who are struggling and study them too — put yourself in their shoes and understand why they do what they do. You don’t have to agree with anyone, and you don’t always have to be right.

Save your money. Learn the habit of saving and develop it early, often, and on purpose. Don’t drink — if you never start, you never have to quit. Don’t smoke; don’t even try it. Don’t make enemies, and don’t fight unless it is for something truly worth

fighting for — then fight for it with everything you have. Live in the moment, plan for the future, and enjoy the journey. Embrace every experience, good or bad, knowing with total certainty that it is just the next step toward where you're meant to go.

That is the curriculum. Notice how little of it is about basketball. The game is just the gym where these habits get their reps. A child who learns to save, to tell the truth, to keep promises to themselves, to surround themselves with good people — that child has already won, whether or not they ever start a varsity game. One step at a time, a kid with those habits can go anywhere, do anything, start over at any time, and simply become who they want to be.

## Chapter 10

# Something Bigger Than the Scoreboard

I cannot write an honest book about raising young people and leave out the thing that holds my own life together. You must believe in something bigger than yourself. For me, that is my faith in God, and it is the foundation everything else in these pages is built on.

I am not afraid to share it. My belief is so strong it hardly feels like faith to me — it feels like fact. And the relief of it is real: when you set the weight of the world down and trust that you are held by something greater, you free up an enormous amount of strength and endurance to spend on others. That is what I want for your child — not the crushing belief that it all depends on them and their performance, but the freedom of knowing their worth was never on the scoreboard to begin with.

***Faith in something bigger than yourself is the ground a confident, courageous life is built on.***

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Whatever your family's beliefs, hear the principle, because it is universal and it is urgent. A child whose entire identity rides on their athletic results is a child living on a knife's edge. One injury, one bad season, one growth spurt that goes the wrong way, and their whole sense of self can collapse. But a child anchored in something larger — their faith, their family, a purpose beyond themselves — can lose a game, or even lose the sport entirely, and still know exactly who they are. That anchor is the single greatest gift you can give a young athlete, and it has nothing to do with sports.

This is why I tell parents that the goal was never to raise a star. The goal is to raise a whole person, using the game as the practice field. The wins are wonderful and the trophies are fun, but they are not the point and they were never going to last. Love, gratitude, character, and faith — those are the things that outlive every final score.

So make sure your child hears, often and clearly, that your love for them is not connected to their performance. Not after a 30-point night, not after an 0-for-10 night. The same. When a child knows in their bones that they are loved no matter what the scoreboard says, you have given them the security to take risks, to fail bravely, and to chase greatness without fear — because their worth was never on the line in the first place.

## Chapter 11

# The New Game: How to Become Invaluable

Let's talk about the thing every parent is anxious about right now: NIL — name, image, and likeness — and all the money and noise that has come pouring into youth and amateur sports. I am going to tell you the truth that almost nobody else will. Do not build your child's life around the rules. The rules are going to keep changing.

They move the goalposts constantly. What is allowed this year will be different next year, and different again the year after that. The deals, the ages, the limits, the loopholes — all of it is a moving target. If you try to chase the rulebook, you will spend your whole life sprinting after a finish line that keeps sliding away, and you will teach your child to do the same. That is a miserable way to live, and it is a losing strategy on top of it.

So here is where I want your family's attention instead, on the one thing that never changes no matter how the rules move: value. NIL is downstream of value. A name is only worth something if the person behind it is worth something to a team. Strip away all the headlines and the real question is simple and timeless — is your child someone a team cannot afford to be without? Make them that, and they will always have leverage, in any era, under any rulebook. Fail to make them that, and no rule change will ever save them.

***Don't chase the rules. Build the value. NIL is just what value looks like once somebody puts a price on it.***

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So let's get practical. How does a young person actually become invaluable? It is not about scoring the most points, and this is where most families go wrong. The real currency is this: did you make everyone around you better? Not just during the game — all the time. Are your teammates better because they practice with you every single day? That is the question I want your child asking themselves, because that is the question every coach, every program, and every future employer is secretly asking about them.

Go further, because this is what separates the good from the truly great. To be great, even your opponents should improve for having played against you. The truly great champions of all time are not just unstoppable individuals — they are forces of nature that change everyone and everything around them. They raise the level of

every room they walk into. That is what invaluable actually means. It is not how much you take from the game; it is how much you add to everyone else in it.

Here is how I teach a young person to build that kind of value, brick by brick:

- Outwork everyone, always. Value starts with a work ethic nobody can question. If you are the hardest worker in the gym, you become the standard the whole team measures itself against — and standards are invaluable.
- Make your teammates better. Pass them the confidence, not just the ball. Encourage, set up, elevate. The player who makes four other players better is worth more than the player who scores forty and shrinks everyone around them.
- Be the ultimate teammate and the easiest person to coach. Listen, do the unglamorous things, show up early, stay late. Coaches build around the kid they can trust, not just the kid who is talented.
- Master your bread and butter. Be genuinely, undeniably excellent at something the team needs. Real skill, earned in private, is the foundation everything else stands on.
- Carry yourself with character. Be the same person on a bad day as a good one. Reputation gets you noticed; character is what makes you someone people want to invest in for the long haul.

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Now, I am not naive about the modern world, and I do not want your child to be either. Once the value is real, there is a second skill worth learning: how to tell your own story. Understanding marketing, how to build a simple platform, how to present yourself, how to use the new tools of the day — these are genuine, valuable skills for today's world and tomorrow's future, and honestly they matter as much for the parents as for the kids. A young person who is invaluable on the court and also knows how to communicate that has every door open to them.

But the order is everything, and if you remember one thing from this chapter, remember the order. Substance first, story second. A personal brand wrapped around real value is a powerful thing. A personal brand wrapped around nothing is just a billboard for an empty lot, and everybody can tell. Teach your child to become genuinely invaluable, then teach them to let the world know. Do it in that order and the NIL rules — whatever they happen to be that year — will simply take care of themselves. Do it backwards and no rulebook will ever make them matter.

## Chapter 12

# The Parent's Playbook

Let's bring it all home and make it usable. If you remember nothing else from this book, remember this chapter. Here is the whole approach, distilled into the things you can actually do, starting today.

First, protect the love above all else. The love of the game is the golden goose. Everything good — the work ethic, the confidence, the resilience, the results — hatches from it. Guard it like it's the most valuable thing in your house, because it is. If you ever have to choose between winning this weekend and protecting your child's joy, protect the joy every single time. The wins will come back. The joy might not.

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Here is the short version of the playbook — the dos and don'ts I would hand every parent at my Academy:

- Do watch what they reach for when no one is making them. That is your honest read on the passion.
- Do push and pull, lending them your belief. Don't drag or beg — if you're forcing it, stop and change the game.
- Do celebrate effort and figuring-things-out louder than you celebrate the final score.
- Do build one bread-and-butter win at a time. Confidence comes from competence, never from a speech.
- Do model listening, and guard their attention from the noise of the world.
- Do make the car ride home about love, not the box score. It is the most important coaching you will ever do.
- Do let them fail bravely. A home that allows failure is a home that grows courage.
- Do teach them to make everyone around them better — that is how a player becomes invaluable.
- Don't hang their worth on the scoreboard — and don't hang yours on it either.
- Don't chase the NIL rulebook. Build real value, then teach them to tell their story — in that order.

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Notice that almost every item on that list is something the parent does, not something the child does. That is not an accident. After a lifetime in gyms with tens of thousands of kids, I can tell you the single biggest variable in a young athlete's journey is not their talent, their coach, or their team. It is the adult in the stands. You are the program. You are the culture. You are the weather your child plays in.

That is a heavy truth, but it should make you hopeful, because it means the most important factor is the one thing you fully control: yourself. You do not need to be wealthy, or athletic, or an expert in the sport. You just need to protect the love, model the habits, stay calm in the storm, and keep reminding your child that they are loved no matter what the scoreboard says. Do that, and you will have done the job — win or lose, pro or not.

## A Letter to Your Kid

# A Letter to Your Kid

I want to close with the letter I would write to your child — the one I hope you will read to them someday, or simply live out in front of them until they know it by heart. These are the truest things I know.

What could have been, what should have happened, what might have — none of it matters now. We are here. The present. Exactly where we're supposed to be. So here is what I know for sure.

You have to be strong, and you have to be tough. Persevere. Go the extra mile. Treat people with kindness and respect, and you'll get it back. Hold yourself accountable and keep a no-excuses policy with yourself. Surround yourself with people who are going somewhere, and stay away from the ones who aren't. Take care of your body and your mind. Aim high. Help others. Learn the magical art of compromise and teamwork.

Make a decision to be your best every day. Make the choice to be your best every day. Make the sacrifices to get what you want. Live in the moment, plan for the future, and enjoy the journey — every part of it, the good and the bad — knowing with total certainty that it is just the next step toward your destiny. One step at a time, you can go anywhere, do anything, start over at any time, and simply be who you want to be.

***Be your best. If God wants it, you'll be great.***

That has been my message my whole life, and it is the one I am handing to you now. Love your kid. Protect their joy. Build the person, not just the player. Stay calm when the world gets loud. And never, ever let them forget that they are loved exactly as they are — here, now, on this ordinary, perfect day.

— *Coach Teddy*