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ATHLETES' ENTOURAGE – FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The whole family, and particularly parents, are encouraged to support and always act in the best interest of their children. Accordingly, the primary objectives of this section are to:

- Help parents in decision-making by providing tools and concrete examples,
- Help parents to deal with the complex stakeholder environment of an elite athlete,
- Help parents to maintain a balanced approach to the athlete's sport and entourage.

"The role of parents is very important because they are generally the ones bringing the child into sport. We would like to help them understand their role as an athlete's parent and what they can do to support their child." Sergey Bubka, Chairman of the Athletes' Entourage Commission

Parents have a very important role to play in the athlete's sporting activity. Together with the athlete, who is and will always remain the main player, parents will mature over the years. It is a challenging and never-ending process in which parents need to be advised competently. Also, the entourage of an athlete is a constantly evolving system. In this environment, the family, and particularly parents, is one of the closest and most influential populations.

Hot Tips for Parents

For parents, there are several issues that arise on a daily basis, but it is difficult to know who to ask for advice and, for the most part, there are no clear answers or plans to follow. Many issues arise because parents are unsure as to how they can best assist the athlete. Parents may often choose the less opportune decision over the more appropriate one.

Parents are primarily responsible for the overall evolution of the athlete as a person. At an early stage, parents should promote the notion of a healthy balance between sport and personal development. They should act as a regulator for young athletes, who could be still too young to have a clear and long-term vision of their career.

"Early in my sporting career, my parents were definitely the most important part of my entourage... I wouldn't be in the sport without them." Angela Ruggiero, member of the Athletes' Entourage Commission

Practical Tips for Parents - Beginner Athlete

The athlete competes at a regional level. They are at the beginning of their career.

Interaction with the athlete

- Focus on and dedication to sport can often be detrimental to other aspects of the athlete's life. In order to help their child be the best athlete possible, parents should



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try to promote a balanced life. Try to choose their important activities, set goals in these areas and manage time appropriately to meet these goals.

- Help the athlete to set priorities and manage their time. You should avoid deciding on their behalf. The athlete should learn about taking decisions and responsibility.

School and Education

- Talk with the athlete about school education and not only about sport.
- Help them to find scholarships. A lot of opportunities and work-experience positions are unclaimed because no-one knows about them. Contact their Federation or National Olympic Committee to see if there are any scholarship programmes.

Interaction with the Coach

- Open, honest and cooperative communication is essential from the start of any relationship.
- Organise regular meetings with the coach and the athlete in order to agree upon school timetables or schedules for training.

Interactions with other populations of the athlete's entourage

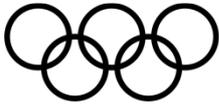
- Agents
 - If there is a system of regulation or licensing, make sure the agent is a licensed agent. The National and International Federations will be able to give you information.
 - Never allow your child to sign a contract you do not understand - ask for the advice of an independent lawyer.
- Media
 - If you need advice on what you could be saying or to get context on current issues, the various governing bodies of your sport can also help. Contact your National Olympic Committee and it will tell you what its position (or the International Olympic Committee's position) is on certain issues. With this information, you can then develop your own clear stance on the subject.

Practical Tips for Parents - Intermediate Athlete

The athlete competes at national level. They reach high junior ranking and achieve their first pro experience.

Interaction with the athlete

- Be aware that competitive sport is complex, especially if the athlete has not participated at elite level before.



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- Support the perspective that sport is just a game, highlighting its values as a preparation for life. The career of an elite athlete is short and you should encourage the idea of a career plan.

School and education

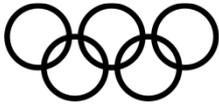
- For the athlete, one of the best way to build experience and education while competing is to volunteer their time. There are plenty of volunteer opportunities for an athlete - be it in the administration of their sport, in their local club, in a school, or at any events in which they are not competing. Encourage the athlete to fit such activities into their training schedule, as this will allow them to build work experience and learn new skills.

Interaction with the Coach

- As parents, you must acknowledge that a coach's expertise and knowledge makes them an authority figure within the sport and that they must be treated as such.
- In case of problems with the coach, try to contact or meet him as soon as possible. If needed, do not hesitate to contact the federation to act as a mediator.

Interactions with other populations of the athlete's entourage

- Sponsors
 - Contact potential sponsors. Try to find sponsors that suit the athlete's sport and personality.
- Agents
 - Take your time, together with your child, to choose an agent. It is a key decision that will affect the athlete's career. Make sure you find out important information, such as whether or not he or she is well respected in the world of sport. Ask for recommendations from people around you.
 - Stipulate a written contract with the agent. And, if nothing else, make sure the contract clearly states: the duration; how the agent will get paid, how much, and by whom; what the agent is expected to do; and how the contract may be terminated.
- Media
 - If the media ask a question which you do not know the answer to, don't be afraid to admit that you don't know. It is better to stick to what you know and are prepared to talk about.
 - The best way to learn is to watch other people when they are approached by the media. Watch other athletes' parents - how do they react to the media? Who is well prepared and who is not? Try to see who you can learn from.



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Practical Tips for Parents - Advanced Athlete

The athlete competes at an international level. Their focus is towards pro events and they have several years of experience.

Interaction with the athlete

- Ensure the athlete respects the principles of good sportsmanship, behaviour and ethics. They should stay grounded, and parents should avoid expressions such as: "the referee was terrible".
- No matter what stage the athlete is at, you should always try to manage them so that they live within their means and follow a monthly budget.

School and education

- If possible, give preference to sports-friendly schools and institutions.
- Speak to other athletes' parents to see how they have managed to find time for distance-learning education courses or short-term training courses for their child.

Interaction with the Coach

- As parents, you must acknowledge that a coach's expertise and knowledge makes them an authority figure within the sport and that they must be treated as such.

Interactions with other populations of the athlete's entourage

- Sponsors
 - Top athletes usually have no problem attracting sponsors. But those who do not stand at the top of the podium also have the ability to attract interesting and prosperous sponsorship deals.
 - Remember to check with National Federations and National Olympic Committees so you are aware of any sponsor-related opportunities or restrictions.
- Agents
 - Take your time, together with your child, to choose an agent. It is a key decision that will affect the athlete's career. Make sure you find out important information, such as whether or not he or she is well respected in the world of sport. Ask for recommendations from people around you.
 - Make sure the agent will have no conflict of interests in taking decisions. Is he/she totally independent from clubs or other associations, for instance?
- Media
 - If you need advice on what you could be saying or to get context on current issues, the various governing bodies of your sport can also help. Contact your National Olympic Committee and it will tell you what its position (or the International Olympic Committee's position) is on certain issues. With this information, you can then develop your own clear stance on the subject.