

# 2.1 Families and sports I

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## Introduction

The purpose of this unit is to reflect on a topic that is especially relevant when it comes to sports: the role of the family, and their relationship with the sporting entity.

We know the significance that a family's role has in a child's life, and just how important family is in the early stages in terms of protection, learning and passing on beliefs and culture. For this reason, parents need to be **allies and facilitators** in terms of sports and the professionals working with and for their child.

Understanding the different types of families within a sports context and the sports triad, as well as encouraging excellent communication between all key stakeholders, will facilitate a player's development.

We will explain the importance of maintaining consistent boundaries and respect for the work. We will look at strategies for coaches and parents that will help them communicate and support the child athlete in their respective roles.

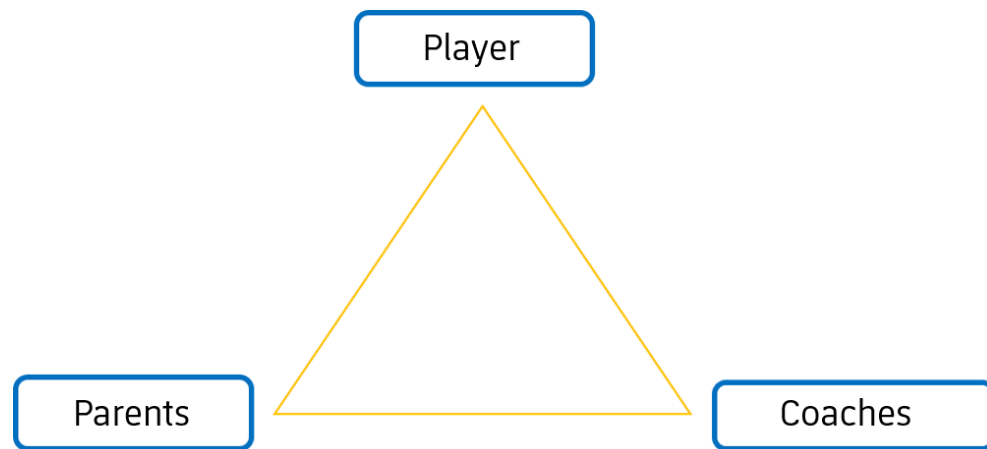
### Sports triad

Throughout this course, we discuss the individual's integral development through sport, but this development will not be holistic or systematic if we do not include families within the sporting context.

We have already discussed family as the primary context for socialization (Rodríguez and García, 2010) and how family determines a child's educational style, which encourages their development in various areas such as attachment, communication, control and meeting demands.

According to Ortín (2009), the people who make up the sports triad – the players, the parents and the coach – are key when it comes to shaping young athletes (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Sports Triad (Smoll, 1991)**



Source: Retrieved from  
<https://www.efdeportes.com/efd153/asesoramiento-en-los-escalafones-inferiores-futbol.htm>

Sporting entities often fail to take into account take the parents of athletes, and they may even try to keep them as far away from the sporting environment as possible, due to a belief that “parents cause trouble.” Clubs/coaches and families must find a way to work together and respect and understand each other’s views in order to facilitate the child’s development and encourage optimal performance, avoiding difficulties or tension. Both parents and coaches are role models and very important figures for young athletes.

On the one hand, we know that parents need to be involved in their children’s sporting activities in order to support them and facilitate their engagement in sport as much as possible. On the other hand, excessive involvement, lack of objective judgment or taking on tasks that should be ascribed to coaches can complicate the coach-family and/or player-coach relationship because of the family’s influence. While it can be quite a difficult task, it is essential to reach an understanding so as not to confuse the child or make them feel like they are caught in a “war” between their family and the coach.

This topic has been studied extensively in the literature. Below, we outline some **ideal** characteristics for parents to work on within a sports environment (Gordillo, 2000; Gimeno, 2003; Smoll and Smith, 1999):

Control their own emotions and encourage positive emotions in their children.

Accept the coach's role without interfering or contradicting their instructions or approaches.

Respect everyone who plays a role in the athletic environment: their children's teammates, referees, other parents, etc., without making derogatory comments.

Support and accompany their child and the team in both successes and failures.

Work with their child on responsibility and autonomy: allow them to make their own decisions on age-appropriate matters, such as packing their bag or remembering commitments and following through with them, without the family needing to "control" all of their movements.

Be an example of good behavior both on and off the field.

Emphasize effort and perseverance. Value progress and learning.

Accept both triumphs and frustrations.

Understand competition as an opportunity for learning and improvement.

View sport as a way to pass on values such as discipline, ambition and teamwork.

It is essential that parents and coaches share the same goals. If they are not on the same page, this will cause doubt and confusion for the child. Let's use the example of a father who always insists to their child that if someone passes them the ball, they should move toward the goal and take a shot. The coach, however, has told the child that as soon as they get the ball, they should look for teammate number 9 so that the latter player can finish the maneuver. Whatever the player chooses to do, they will feel conflicted, because either way they will be disobeying someone. They may choose to ignore their father, who, as a result, may reprimand them on the way home, at the dinner table, in a conversation with their siblings, etc. Or they may choose to ignore the coach, the person who gets to decide whether or not they will be a starter in the next match, and the person who gave tactical instructions to the whole team. In this case, they have not only disobeyed the coach, but have also disrupted the game play that they practiced with their teammates.

This is very common in sporting contexts and causes the athlete to doubt or even lack confidence in their mentors, because they don't have a clear picture of what they should do or why (Ortín, 2009). It is the responsibility of the parents and the coach to ensure children are not exposed to these kinds of situations. If it does arise and the coach is aware of it – because they have clearly seen the parents' actions or the player has told them – a meeting must be planned in order to ask the family to work together, trust and respect the work that the Club is doing, since there is no benefit in making the player feel uncomfortable. Likewise, if the family disagrees

with the coach about something, they can request a meeting in order to share their point of view and exchange opinions, always ensuring they are not argumentative or aggressive, especially if the child is present.

**Figure 2: Disputes and arguments during a sporting event**



Source: [Untitled image about violence in grassroots football]. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://magnet.xataka.com/en-diez-minutos/el-video-de-la-batalla-campal-que-ilustra-la-amarga-realidad-soterrada-del-futbol-base>

These types of behaviors should not be seen on the track or field of play.

**Figure 3: Aggressive behaviors that occur during competition**



Source: [Untitled image about aggression in grassroots football]. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://psicologiadeporte.wordpress.com/2012/11/27/agresion-un-complejo-problema-del-deporte-actual/>

**Figure 4: Family members during a sport event**



Athletes' parents encourage and reprimand at a children's game in Seville.

**Juan Carlos Toro**

Source: [Untitled image about violence in football]. (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://elpais.com/deportes/2015/03/16/actualidad/1426511182\\_838817.html](https://elpais.com/deportes/2015/03/16/actualidad/1426511182_838817.html)

Communication is key if there is going to be collaboration between families and the club. We suggest using **meetings** as a technique for including families in the sporting environment and working together with them. Just as training and competition are for the benefit of the player and the team, meetings are a tool for getting to know the family and working alongside them for the sake of the child's development.

## **Family**

The concept of family has been widely studied from various scientific viewpoints including anthropology, psychology, sociology, etc. Throughout history, the concept and composition of families has changed. It is not universal and varies according to culture and time, for example, nuclear, single parent and extended families, same-sex parents, etc. We will not be exploring these concepts here now, but we do want to highlight the degree of complexity that exists when attempting to understand families, since each is different in its own way. Below are the most common roles that families fulfill:

- a. The protection and survival role: the family provides food, health care, shelter, etc.
- b. The identity creation role: from an early age, the family is the place where we create personal relationships with ourselves and others. These relationships play an important role in determining how we will develop as adults.
- c. The educator role: in every society, the family is the first school for how to be a human. Families teach children how to speak, walk and behave, along with many other learned skills.

- d. The socialization role: the family is the place where children learn about the culture in which they live, their customs, values, standards and codes (Savater, 1997). Thanks to family, the child is able to understand the society in which they live and adapt themselves to it.

There is no doubt that parents play a very important role in the lives of their children. It is the same when we talk about sports and the development of a young athlete's personal characteristics (Cruz, Boixadós, Torregrosa and Mimbreno, 1996).

Keeping in mind the characteristics and complexity of the sporting environment, the concept of the family and its role in this area is essential for the appropriate development of the child – both as a person and as an athlete (Ortín, 2009).

For this reason, the behavioral patterns of parents also affect a child's development when it comes to sport:

- **Creating a sports habit**, including preferences about what physical activities are chosen, may be determined by the parent since they are a reference model for their child (Gimeno, 2003). There is a strong correlation between parents who play sport and the likelihood of their children also playing sport.
- **Social and communication skills**: the way parents interact with their children and people from different environments will be the athlete's reference point for how they should interact with their peers and other adults such as coaches, referees, doctors, etc. Here, we are referring to those moments when athletes express their feelings, solve problems, recognize the attributes of their colleagues, etc. If parents in the stands criticize the referee, there is a greater chance that their child will copy that kind of behavior. A player who has learned assertive communication at home will be more likely to use this kind of communication style with a coach.
- **Parents' expectations for their children**: having very high or very low expectations for their child's performance can cause stress and/or lack of motivation if these expectations are not adjusted to the player's actual abilities. Parents who constantly tell their child that they have to be the best, that they can't slow down, that they are better than their peers, etc., can affect motivation, especially if the athlete is aware that they are a good player, but not the best on their team. Additionally, children may develop feelings of frustration due to not meeting their parents' expectations and may feel that they are a disappointment to their family.
- **Attributing success or failure**: by this we are referring to how parents explain their child's successes and failures. This impacts a person's locus of control as well as how they react to other

family situations (Ortín, 2009). If, on the one hand, we always attribute success to the child's good performance and great talent, while blaming or attributing failure to the teammate who made a bad pass, a referee who made a poor call or simply because of bad luck, then this could cause feelings of frustration in these situations because it feels as though the player has no control over what is happening. Helping children to be realistic and to reflect on their mistakes as well as their successes will improve their critical thinking skills.

- **Motivation vs. pressure:** parents should encourage their children to have fun and focus their motivation on improving performance instead of on the outcome or avoiding punishment (Ortín, 2009). Providing reinforcement and emotional support when a child has performed poorly or obtained a bad result will provide them with a sense of security and self-esteem. Congratulating children only when they win and not valuing their effort, as well as punishing children so that they “learn to pay more attention” will all negatively impact the athlete's confidence.
- **Attitudes:** attitudes are a set of beliefs and feelings that encourage people to act in a certain way (Dosil, 2003). Both the attitudes and the beliefs that a family expresses about sport and how they treat people who are part of the sports environment, the places where they play sports, etc., will contribute to a child starting and continuing to practice physical activity, and to behave civilly towards people and the sports facilities. If a child feels that their parents see sport as a waste of time, they will not feel supported in the activity that they are involved in.

**Figure 5: Conflict between a coach and the referee**



Source: [Untitled image about violence and attitudes in football]. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.nnc.mx/articulo/curiosidades/video:-el-gesto-de-un-nino-espanol-que-ha-emocionado-al-futbol-mundial/1368591683>

- **Responsibility:** The sporting environment creates situations where players are required to commit to their responsibilities and be autonomous from a very early age. Athletes need to make

decisions on the field, organize and take care of their equipment, etc. Depending on the level of autonomy that families have given them at home, children will be able to adapt at their own speed to the autonomous demands that come with being an athlete (packing suitcases and duffel bags, remembering the equipment they need to bring, etc.).

### **Types of parents**

There are a lot of different descriptions for the types of parents involved in sports. Romero (2002; 2004) broadly differentiates between types of parents as follows:

- Parents who have been elite athletes.
- Parents who did not meet their elite goals.
- Disinterested parents.
- Parents who are interested in athletic development
- Parent “coaches”.
- Fanatical parents  
<http://www.fbcv.es/blog/2017/03/consideraciones-pedagogicas-para-padres-y-madres-de-jovenes-deportistas>

In our case, we will summarize and discuss four types of families.

**Table 1: Types of families**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Disinterested</b></p> <p>They are not interested in their child's athletic activities.<br/> They tend to show little interest in other areas of the child's life.<br/> They do not interfere with athletic performance.<br/> They occasionally use sports as a "babysitting service" for their children.</p>                                                                                                                                                                     | <p><b>Coaches</b></p> <p>Give instructions from the stands.<br/> Typically contradict instructions given by the coaches.<br/> Criticize referees and teammates.<br/> Disrupt the game.<br/> Tend not to be happy with their child's performance and are very critical.<br/> In the most extreme cases, they punish their children for poor athletic performance.</p> |
| <p><b>Overprotective</b></p> <p>They accompany their children to all their activities, but when their child faces difficulties they feel very sorry for them or even encourage them to stop participating to avoid suffering.</p> <p>They pack their child's bags and get their equipment ready rather than allowing them to do things independently.</p> <p>They attribute their child's poor performance to bad luck and do not encourage self-criticism to promote improvement.</p> | <p><b>Balanced</b></p> <p>They do not interfere with the coach or the activities being performed.</p> <p>They trust the coach and their instructions.</p> <p>They stay in the stands, encourage and support the team.</p> <p>They show interest in their child's athletic activities.</p>                                                                            |

Source: Prepared by the author.

We mentioned these classifications because one strategy that can help us in our role as a coach is to understand what types of parents we have on our team so we can behave appropriately and work together with families who may be hindering their child's development. "Sharing and accepting common goals and putting in the effort needed to reach them" (Gimeno, 2006, p. 5) is essential in sport, and families must be involved in order to reach those goals.

**Table 2: Type of parents and strategies**

| <b>Types of parents</b> | <b>Strategies</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Indifferent          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Try to discover why they are disinterested in order to make it easier for them to get involved in their child's activities.</li><li>- Explain the importance of showing interest in their child's activities. We all like to feel loved and cared for.</li></ul> |
| 2. Parent "coaches".    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Speak with the parent privately and explain the negative effects of receiving conflicting messages from the club and the family. Ask the child how they feel when they experience these situations in order to avoid them in the future.</li></ul>               |
| 3. Overprotective       | 3. Look for joint activities where the parent allows their child to do things for themselves and build their self-esteem.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 4. Elite athletes       | 4. Explain the importance of adjusting their expectations for their children, and remind them of the main goal when a child starts playing sport, which is to have fun.                                                                                                                                  |

Source: Prepared by the author.

## **Club-family communication**

### **Planning meetings with families:**

1. Initial group meeting at the beginning of the season: this meeting must be scheduled before the start of the season and must involve parents from the corresponding category. This meeting should be led by the coordinator or director, together with the team coach.
  - a. The first meeting must meet various objectives:
    - i. Welcome the new season and new families to the Club.
    - ii. Present the Club's philosophy and mission.
    - iii. Explain the Club's internal regulations.
    - iv. Establish expectations for the family-club-player relationship and the parents' role within the club, as well as direct and two-way communication.
    - v. Provide information about schedules, uniforms and planning for competitions.
    - vi. Questions and suggestions.

2. Individual meetings with families: this first meeting is important for gaining specific knowledge about the expectations that the family has regarding the club and the sport in question. The meeting creates a space for communication where everyone can ask questions and discuss more personal types of information about the player, such as their fears or any diagnoses that are important from a sports perspective (e.g. ADD, ADHD, etc.). Here, we can also invite the family to offer their collaboration and support in general, and to trust in the work that is going to be done as well as the professionals who will be coaching their child.
3. Periodic meetings with families: organize meetings or encounters with families when they come to pick up their child from training, after a game, etc.) in order to share relevant information and/or monitor their progress over the course of the season. You cannot always guarantee that a child's family will be present. However, keep in mind that you can also use other options such as a phone call, e-mail, video calls, etc. The important issue here is staying in contact with the family regarding their child. If there is an urgent situation – for example, a confrontation between players, a change in family situation that affects the athlete, etc. – parents and coaches should speak together as quickly as possible rather than waiting for a set meeting days later.
4. Group meeting at the end of the season: having a closing meeting and assessing the season will help establish objectives for improving the next season and will help maintain the relationship that has been built with the families over the course of the season.

## Conclusions

Continuous and two-way communication creates bonds, and brings people together to share their journeys, for the good of the people that parents love most, that is, their children.

Although in this unit we have focused on families, we must not forget that they are not the only ones who are involved in a player's training and athletic development. The players themselves are also involved, as are the referees, managers, etc. All of these are part of the athlete's sporting environment and are fundamental in the player's social, personal and athletic development.

Both the protagonists mentioned above and taking care of the relationship between parents of the same team, are aspects that clubs and sports institutions have to promote and optimize on an on-going basis. In other words, it is important to always be "shaping the environment that shapes the person."

We would like to end this unit with the following quote: “Players, families and clubs are part of the same team; they should never play against one another.”

## 2.2 Intervention with families in sports environments

### Introduction

In this unit we will suggest ways to better get to know the families of the athletes that we train on a daily basis. Family is reflection that the athlete is constantly looking to, and it is here they learn the first things about life, from the environment around them (language, routines, beliefs, culture, etc.). Getting to know an athlete's family assumes that you will also get to know the athlete. From a systems perspective, we know that any change that occurs to one system (family, sports, education) has an impact on the other systems. Thus a key objective for sports professionals is to understand who we are training, and this implies understanding an athlete's family.

The goal of this mutual understanding is to provide an ideal motivational climate for all members of the sports environment, focusing on well-being and on properly developing all of the athlete's skills.

When considering this objective, it is possible to use a preventative approach in view of the difficulties that can arise over the course of a season. At the same time, we can encourage a sense of belonging and identity, which both player and athlete can create together with the club they represent.

### First meeting

Here we would like to propose an outline that can be used as a guide for structuring the content of the meeting. We have also laid out a possible time frame for family meetings.

It is important to clearly express to the parents the objectives that you want to achieve, and to plan out ahead of time the topics that will be discussed. This will convey a sense of control and confidence to the families, and will make it easier for coaches to communicate with parents.

**Table 3: Guide for structuring the content of the meeting**

|                                   | Time          | Content                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Opening</b>                    | 5 minutes     | Thank the parents for coming.<br><br>Club Presentation for the new season.                                                                          |
| <b>Sporting program</b>           | 15 minutes    | Present the season goals.<br><br>Training schedule and location.<br><br>Clothing details.<br><br>Costs.<br><br>Internal regulations and procedures. |
| <b>Parental roles</b>             | 20 minutes    | Explain the club's expectations for parents.                                                                                                        |
| <b>Parent-coach relationships</b> | 5 minutes     | Two-way communication and frequency of parent-coach communication.                                                                                  |
| <b>Closing</b>                    | 15-20 minutes | Questions and concerns.<br><br>Thank the families for their time and attendance.                                                                    |

Source: Prepared by the author.

Given that it is the beginning of the season and the families do not know each other (or even if they do, often there are new families), we suggest some group icebreaker activities that can help the parents get to know one another. This will help them to start feeling like part of the club and the team, and also to facilitate communication from the outset.

### **Personal interview**

In order to get to know the family on a more intimate and personal level, we would suggest the option of having a 1-on-1 interview. This makes it possible to go deeper into issues that could not be expanded on in the initial group meeting. It also lets the family share useful information with the coach regarding their child.

It is important to have this interview at the beginning of the pre-season so that both parties feel comfortable and can talk and listen to each other, and feel that they are getting something valuable out of the meeting. The purpose of the interview is not to 'interrogate' the family. Rather, it allows

the family to provide information that can help the coach to motivate the player to reach their highest potential in every area (athletic, personal, social and emotional).

An interview guide template is provided below.

**Figure 6: Interview guide**

|                                                                                                                                    |                               |         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------|
| Season:                                                                                                                            |                               |         |
| The player's first and last names:                                                                                                 |                               |         |
| Date of birth:                                                                                                                     | Category:                     |         |
| Mother's name:                                                                                                                     | Cell:                         | E-mail: |
| Father's name:                                                                                                                     | Cell:                         | E-mail: |
| Family status: married/separated                                                                                                   |                               |         |
| Custody: father/mother                                                                                                             |                               |         |
| Number of siblings:                                                                                                                | Place in sibling birth order: |         |
| • Year the athlete started playing sports:                                                                                         |                               |         |
| • Family history of playing sports (which sport, level achieved, years played, etc.)                                               |                               |         |
| • How important is it to you that your child play sports?                                                                          |                               |         |
| • Expectations you have about their performance.                                                                                   |                               |         |
| • Problems in other seasons/clubs.                                                                                                 |                               |         |
| • Describe 3 of your child's strengths and 3 of their weaknesses.                                                                  |                               |         |
| • What values would you like to be instilled into your child through playing sports?                                               |                               |         |
| • Explore healthy life habits:                                                                                                     |                               |         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sleep and rest</li> <li>- Food</li> <li>- Hydration</li> <li>- Time management</li> </ul> |                               |         |
| • What do you expect from me as your child's coach?                                                                                |                               |         |

Source: Prepared by the author.

## Working with parents and coaches

In the same way that coaches plan each training session and match at a technical, tactical, physical and mental level, having a plan in place for how to communicate with families can make the club-parent relationship much easier.

The following is a proposal by Gimeno Marco (n.d.) which outlines advice for coaches and parents, the purpose of which is to raise awareness about the importance of each individual's behavior and the relationship between staff and parents.

The suggested activities can be done individually and/or as a group.

**Table 4: Activities with parents and coaches**

| Tasks, questions or reflections that can be progressively used with coaches and parents                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| For the coaches                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | For the parents                                                                                                                                              |
| 1. Identify the <b>objectives</b> for their work with young athletes, and why they are important.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 1. Identify the <b>reasons</b> why they want their children to play sport, and why those reasons are important.                                              |
| 2. Understand the <b>common ground with the parents</b> in terms of these objectives, especially the objectives related to “their child’s training and education.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 2. Understand the <b>common ground with the coach</b> in terms of these reasons, especially the objectives related to an athlete’s “training and education.” |
| 3. Understand that when a group of people share one or more goals and are working towards achieving these goals, they are actually a “team.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                              |
| 4. Understand that when the basic conditions for working as a team are present and that the people involved do not work as a team, the immediate consequence is lower performance and efficiency in terms of achieving objectives.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                              |
| 5. Identify the <b>attitudes and behaviors</b> they have observed <b>in parents</b> of young athletes (attitudes and behaviors observed as a coach) that in their opinion negatively affect their training and education. Do some attitudes and behaviors “fit” into either of the following two styles?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>a) “High pressure or excessive involvement” style:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do I push or encourage my child too much to play sport and be involved in competition?</li> <li>- Am I the type of person who gives my child technical instruction before, during or after competition?</li> <li>- Do I despair or get frustrated when my child or their team loses to opponents that I view as inferior?</li> <li>- Have I ever shown anger towards the coach for not including my child among the starting lineup or for putting them in a position that I don’t feel suits them?</li> <li>- Do I tend to criticize the referee during a competition if I disagree with a decision?</li> <li>- Have I ever criticized or openly argued with the parents of other athletes during training or competition?</li> <li>- Have I ever made fun of an opponent in front of my child?</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                              |

- Have I ever criticized the behavior of my child's coach or the way they do their job?
- Do I sometimes place too much importance on my child's performance or give criticism during a competition?
- Do I "dream" of my child being a great champion someday?

**a) "Rejection or apathy" style:**

- Do I threaten my child or even punish them with not being able to play sport if they are not doing well in school or if they do something wrong?
- Does it tend to annoy me or am I disinterested in attending my child's training sessions or matches?
- Does it annoy me or am I disinterested in attending meetings or speaking with the coach when requested?
- Do I think that my child could be involved in other types of activities that would be more beneficial than sport?

6. Reflect on the possible **causes or reasons that motivate these negative attitudes and behaviors** (lack of knowledge or control, an uncontrolled desire for the child to be like their parents or to achieve what they were unable to achieve, etc.). This question should be answered by coaches/parents.

7. Reflect on the **coach's possible role** (or the parent's role if you are a coach) in addressing a parent's negative attitudes and behaviors: Could coaches provide the parents with useful information to help them understand how to help their child, or to help them work on self-control in situations related to their child's sport, etc.?

8. Identify **attitudes and behaviors** that can be observed **in the parents** of young athletes that in your opinion have a positive impact on their development and education. "Are the parents able to...?"

- Allow our children to be involved in the athletic activity they enjoy most rather than the sport we prefer?
- Be interested in the sport that our child plays: if they enjoy it, if they are having fun, if they are progressing and learning, attending the competitions or activities they are involved in, etc.
- Be interested in the coach's approach toward the sport in question, asking for information about various aspects of the sport, the rules, what is expected from parents, voicing questions or concerns.
- Encourage our child during competition, supporting them, recognizing their effort and interest, but not "acting like a coach."
- Stay calm and have confidence in our child when they make a mistake or things do not go as planned during training or competition.
- Be respectful and courteous towards the opposition coaches and athletes during competition.
- Respect, understand and support the referee's role during a match. Complaints and suggestions can be made through the appropriate channels rather than in public.
- Encourage our child to play sports by the rules.
- Applaud the good performance of our own children as well as that of their teammates and the players on the opposing team.
- Attend, participate and work together with the coach when they call a meeting.
- Work alongside our child, their coach and their school, club or team during training and when organizing activities and competitions.
- Politely and discreetly ask the coach (at an appropriate time and place) if we do not understand something or are unhappy with something they are doing.
- Let our child's coach be in charge of their educational tasks and workload when it comes to sports.
- Do not forget about other family members, making sure that none of them feel left out or glorified/placed on a pedestal because of the sport they play.

9. Do **coaches have a right** to be respected and supported by parents in the work they do? That being said, do they have the **responsibility and the obligation** to support families in their relationship with their children?

8. Do **parents have a right** to information and support from coaches to encourage development and a relationship with their children? That being said, do they have the **responsibility and the obligation** to respect and support coaches in the work they are doing?

10. Are the coaches aware of the enormous **value and usefulness that parents have** in terms of the work they do with their children, and also for them as professionals and as people? Are parents “helpful” when it comes to – for example – getting to know the athletes better, encouraging them to attend and participate in training and competition? And do they receive support and recognition for the work they do with their children?

9. Are the parents aware of the enormous **value and usefulness that coaches have** in terms of their child’s development and education, and for themselves as parents and as people? Are coaches “helpful” when it comes to – for example – getting to know their children better, helping them in other areas of their personal development, such as behavior patterns related to time management, nutrition, being involved in their studies, etc.? And do they receive support and recognition for the teaching work that they do with their children?

If that is the case...

Why not start **working together** “right now”?  
Why not formalize our relationship “right now”?

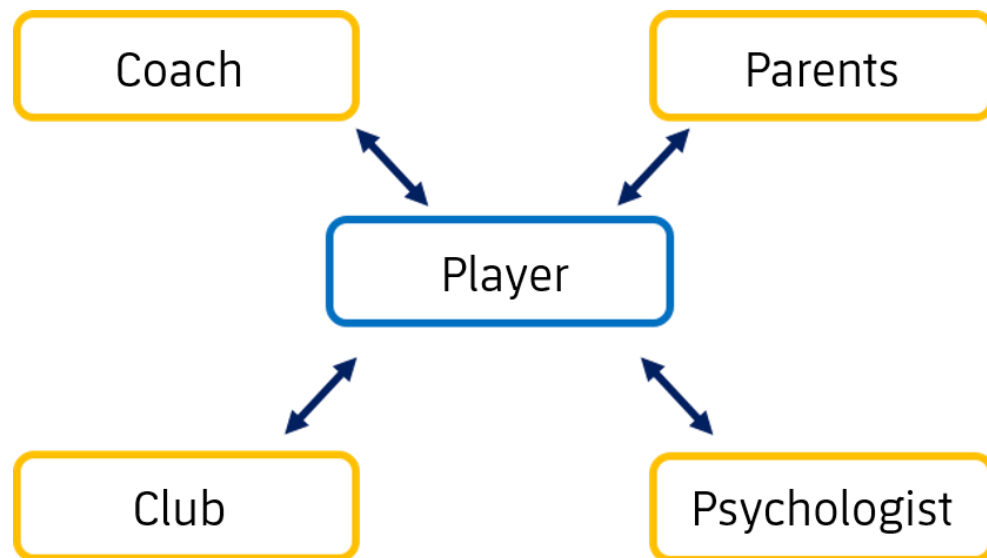
Source: Gimeno Marco, n.d.,  
<http://www.euskonews.eus/0404zbnk/gaia40402es.html>

Reflections shared by both coaches and parents create room for discussion and dialogue in order to bring the two parties closer together and understand each other’s perspective. We recommend having the support of a psychologist who can lead these workshops, at least during the initial sessions.

### **Inter-disciplinary intervention**

Another alternative is to consider inter-disciplinary work to encourage involvement from multiple parties.

**Figure 7: Inter-disciplinary intervention**



Source: Prepared by the author.

Using the systems model as a starting point, negative situations that occur outside of the sports environment can have a big impact on this environment and vice versa. Personal situations such as the chronic illness of a family member, the death of a loved one, parental separation, etc., can result in poor academic and/or athletic performance.

For example: a player's parents inform the coach that they are going through a divorce and their son is not handling the situation well; he has a bad attitude in class and at home, he is absent-minded during training and has had confrontations with his classmates. In light of the situation, the coach suggests that their son see the club's psychologist.

The player visits the psychologist, who suggests that he work on managing his emotions and communication skills so he can better express his feelings. The family visits the psychologist and they are given several techniques so that the parents and the child can work together and communicate about the situation they are going through.

Similarly, and with prior consent from the family, the psychologist discusses some strategies with the coach that will help the player stay in control during situations where he could potentially become upset.

This example is a reflection of what inter-disciplinary intervention would look like in order to ensure an athlete's equilibrium and well-being, and remembering that first and foremost they are a person. Any intervention should be assessed according to the specific situation.

Another typical case that could arise during a season is as follows: exam time is approaching, and some parents on a young children's team choose not to take their children to practice. The team's coaches call a meeting with all the families to express their concern about the lack of commitment that the parents and players have shown towards the other teammates who are attending training, and to themselves.

In order to resolve this situation, the club suggested using a room as a study area and hiring a teacher who could help players with their study issues. This would help to encourage optimal academic performance and good time management in terms of doing homework and studying every day.

During exam weeks, the physical training load will be lower so that the players won't be as tired, and training time will be reduced by 20 minutes. For their part, the coaches request the utmost punctuality from parents when bringing their children to practice, and that players will continue working on their academic responsibilities over the weekend just like they do at the club.

### **Family services**

Another alternative that could be offered to families is a service that provides parents with tools for educating their children within a competitive environment. Understanding the characteristics of the environment in which they train and compete will help parents to better understand that environment and will encourage both the child and the family to adapt more quickly and progressively.

One of the most meaningful features of FC Barcelona Family Services is the active role that families play, and their direct interaction with the club.

The purpose of this service is to provide parents with tools and resources for their child's education within an athletic and competitive environment such as FC Barcelona.

During the season, meetings are organized with the families so they can talk about supporting their child, education and sports, expectations, fears, dreams, pressure, digital technology, appropriate use of social media, nutrition, sleep and rest, food, time management, etc.

<https://www.fcbarcelona.es/es/ficha/846640/servicio-de-atencion-a-las-familias-y-el-entorno>

Initially, the Club proposed a series of topics that could be of interest to families such as healthy cooking, understanding high performance, sports values, etc. After that first season, a direct channel of

communication was created (an email address, tutor, coaches, etc.) so parents could communicate their concerns and request training on topics that worried them, motivated them or things they needed help with (for example, sleep, rest, physiotherapy, etc.).

Masía 360 also offers practical, powerful and useful Family Training Workshops for families who want to delve deeper into different aspects of education, development and/or values. These workshops consist of small groups with experienced trainers, and the groups also fulfill one of the Club's missions – to work side-by-side as a team in order to provide consistency for children and young athletes. <https://www.fcbarcelona.es/es/ficha/846640/servicio-de-atencion-a-las-familias-y-el-entorno>

This kind of training provides families with access to information that interests them, helping them to prevent difficult situations and support their children to become professional players with the healthy habits necessary for achieving athletic and personal success. Furthermore, the training will also help parents and the Club to be on the same page so the players – their children – receive consistent and unified messages. It will also create a space for reflection and debate, which facilitates a bond and a sense of belonging among the parents themselves and between the parents and the Club.

## **Conclusions**

Throughout this unit, we have offered various suggestions and alternatives for encouraging communication between the coach, Club and the families.

The purpose of this communication is to gain mutual knowledge, create a bond of trust when it comes the young athlete's development, and create consistency in the messages the athlete receives from their family and coaches.

In addition, offering families a space where they feel heard and where they are able to voice their opinion will foster a sense of belonging and collaboration with their child's sporting institution. In the same way, the Club will benefit by gaining an understanding of the player's family context.

**Figure 8: The parents of athletes.**

**Guidelines for being a good sports parent:**

1. You will let me choose which sport to play.
2. You will encourage and support me, you will not yell at me.
3. Ask me how it went, not whether I won.
4. You will respect my coach.
5. You will not insult the referee
6. You will not get mad if I have a bad day
7. You will behave appropriately if we go to a game together
8. I am not Messi, Nadal or Gasol
9. Do not punish me with sports
10. Have fun

Source: [Untitled image about rules for good parents of athletes]. (2017). Retrieved from <http://creysport.blogspot.com/2017/02/decalogo-de-un-padre-o-madre-de.html>

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