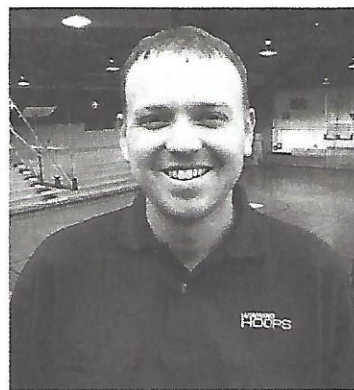


THE FRONT COURT**Dealing With The
'Parent Problem'
In The Preseason**

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Last January, we provided you with the “Top 10 Things Keeping Coaches Awake At Night,” which was built entirely off comments from our basketball-coach subscribers. To no surprise, the topic of “parents” was the runaway “winner” for what keeps coaches tossing and turning on a nightly basis.

Now, we are probing this topic even further. Recently, we asked some of our subscribers via email for their thoughts on how handling parents is different today than in years past, how they communicate with parents and advice for new coaches on dealing with parents. The response, as you can imagine, has been overwhelming.

We are going to turn the extensive comments provided by our coaching community into a full-length feature down the road. But as you plan for your upcoming season, I figure this is the perfect time to provide you with a taste of the feedback we received. These comments specifically deal with how to communicate with parents in the pre-season (right now) to avoid in-season issues.

Almost all coaches these days have a pre-season meeting with parents and players to discuss protocol, expectations, rules, regulations, etc. Jennifer Hoffmann, the girls varsity coach at Richard Montgomery High School in Germantown, Md., says she uses this meeting to provide parents with a packet that includes a “Parents’ Code Of Conduct.” This must be signed and states that the parent will “conduct themselves appropriately at games and respect the coaches, officials, administration, etc.” Hoffman says if a parent isn’t following the rules during the season, she simply reminds them of the forms.

“I haven’t had a problem since I incorporated that form,” she says.

Neill Carvalho, the head girls varsity coach at Phoenix High, Ore., has utilized a Facebook page for the team for the last two seasons. Along with the parent meeting, it is a communication tool between the two parties.

Jim Young, who has coached high school and club basketball in Anchorage, Alaska, for the last 12 years, has a detailed letter he calls, “Parent Tips For A Stress-Free Basketball Season” that every parent receives prior to the start of the season. In this letter, which reads in a question-and-answer format, Young tackles many difficult situations for parents.

This includes: making the coach an ally, how to handle questions regarding playing time, why your child may not be scoring as much as you would like, how to deal with officials, why coaches do not guarantee your child will receive a college scholarship and more.

Young stresses the need for coaches to pursue a variety of avenues when communicating with parents. “Communication overkill is huge to a coach’s success. Coaches that aren’t great communicators normally have a lot more parent-player issues and problems,” he says.

Also, don’t just focus on the pre-season for parent communication. Todd Jahns, the head boys coach at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High in Jackson, Wis., has an ice-cream social after the first game of the season.

He says this creates a “non-threatening” environment in which parents can approach coaches without it seeming like such a formal setting where people might feel a bit more standoffish.

To keep heated discussions to a minimum, Jahns also has a 24-hour rule that prohibits parents from contacting him for a full day after a game.