



5 Steps for Dealing with an Irate Parent

With no exaggeration, the single most important meeting you'll ever have as a coach is your pre-season parent-coach meeting.

This is your opportunity to set out your coaching philosophy (including your plans for the team as a whole and your approach to player development). This is also your chance to explain team rules in a non-confrontational setting (before any discipline is needed), and to recruit volunteers to help you with administrative tasks.

You'll also clearly establish the responsibilities of coaches, parents, and athletes, how you will decide playing time and any administrative issues that are important.

Establishing the roles and responsibilities of coaches, parents, and athletes up front will help you avoid the majority of the potential problems that could crop up throughout the season.

But even if you have an effective pre-season meeting and do your best to manage the expectations of your athletes' parents, it is not uncommon for a parent to approach you in an irate way at some point.

Below are 5 important steps for handling irate parent complaints and resolving these issues in a way that should preserve your credibility and leave the parent feeling satisfied with the interaction.

1) When first approached by an irate parent, try to set up a meeting for the next day in your office. This gives you time to prepare and provides a private location for discussion (dealing with an angry parent on the court or field is never advisable).

2) Prior to the meeting, take time to analyze why the parent might be upset (is their child not playing in games, was their an injury, etc) so that you can have a better understanding of the parent's viewpoint during the meeting.

It is also recommended that you try to find another individual (Athletic Director, Principle, another coach) who is available to sit in on the meeting.

3) During the meeting, allow the parent to voice their frustrations and concerns (be an attentive listener and do NOT interrupt them). When it is your time to speak, explain your point of view as clearly as possible as it relates to THEIR child.



Keep the conversation focused on addressing the parent's specific concern. Do not become involved in comparing their child to other athletes on the team.

4) Remain calm during the meeting. Do not feel the need to match a parent's increased voice level. Try to keep your comments framed in a positive light.

At the end of the meeting, thank the parent for their concern and caring for their child, remind them that you will take their feelings into consideration.

5) After the meeting, discuss the exchange with whoever sat in on the meeting. Was there anything you could have done differently?

Is there anything you've learned that you can call upon the next time you face an irate parent. Is there a new topic that you should add to the pre-season meeting?

Few coaches look forward to dealing with an irate parent; however, the above tips will help you feel more confident and prepared when facing this inevitable challenge.