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| **COACH & PARENT AS PARTNERS**  *Dr. John Heil* |

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| If it takes a village to raise a child, then it takes a team to raise an athlete. The coach is the hub of it all. The officials and referees are the guardians of the game, the rational force that seeks to keep the flow of emotions in bounds. The most essential player in the athlete's life always has been and always will be the parent. Most play this role quite well, struggling quietly but effectively, if not with some misgivings. Of course, there are abundant examples of sport parenting gone wrong - everyone has seen it happen.    Some athletes will succeed regardless of their parents' behavior -- good, bad or ugly. But there are many athletes whose path to success is paved by their parents' good efforts. Olle Larsson, a former National Team Coach in alpine skiing, suggests that more often than not, behind champion athletes are champion parents.    Some thoughts on the make up of the champion parent follow. Consider sharing this list with your swimmers' parents as you collaborate with them in helping their children be the best they can be. |

**BEING A CHAMPION PARENT**

1. Support your youth athlete by providing a safe, sensible opportunity to train and compete, and grow from the experience of sport.
2. Establish an ongoing dialogue with the coach so that you understand his or her philosophy and remain aware of your youth athlete's strengths and weaknesses - athletically and psychologically.
3. Provide unconditional emotional support as your youth athlete rides the ups and downs of the competitive experience, and help him or her learn the lessons of winning and losing.
4. Avoid coaching, that is, avoid giving specific instructions or critique of the technical or tactical aspects of sport.
5. Accept - even as you are bewildered by - your youth athlete's varying demonstrations of composure and distress, maturity and neediness in the competitive environment.
6. Talk candidly with your youth athlete about the role you should play as a parent at competitions.  Be prepared to keep your distance.
7. Work actively to manage your own anxieties and frustrations as you watch your youth athlete compete.  Be sure to set these aside before you interact afterwards.
8. Show composure in the face of stress, and let this serve as a model to your youth athlete.  He or she is watching.
9. Identify mutual expectations for your youth athlete's commitment to training and competition as you make successive commitments to support his or her sport activities financially and logistically.
10. Guide your youth athlete in balancing sport, school, family and other responsibilities.