**The Pros and Cons of Being on a Competitive Youth Sports Team**

Many sports parents wonder if joining a highly competitive sports team is the right decision for their youth athletes. Will it be too much of a time commitment? Will their player still love the sport at such an intense level? If your youth athlete is considering making the jump from recreational or league play to a high-powered travel sports team, here are a few of the pros and cons you should talk with them about.

**Pros:**

**1. Character building.**

If your youth athlete is talented enough to be on a highly competitive travel team, they are probably used to being the best player on their league team. Stepping up to a new level of competition means they may have to work that much harder to stay on top. Chances are they will face teams that are just as good, if not much better, than theirs and they will have to learn how to handle losing with grace. Being on a competitive sports team can really help your youth athlete learn not only how to be a better athlete, but how to be a better person.

**2. Socialization.**

Competitive sports teams are like families. Your child will spend countless hours with their teammates on the field, in the car and at after-game parties/dinners. Held together by a common love of their sport, competitive teams are a great place for your player to make life-long friends, learn how to interact in a large group and develop leadership skills that will be incredibly useful later in life.

**3. A healthier lifestyle.**

In order to be a highly competitive athlete, your player needs to be in top shape. They have to make sure they eat right and stay hydrated, so they’ll learn the importance of balanced nutrition and may develop healthy eating habits that will stick with them long after they leave the team. Competitive athletes are also likely to be much more physically active than other kids their age, and learning to love being active is going to have a drastic impact on their life down the road.

**Cons:**

**1. High cost.**

Highly competitive youth sports teams are much more likely to travel long distances and play in weekend-long tournaments. This means sports parents will have to pay for transportation (gas or airfare), hotels, food, tournament fees, backup equipment, home/away uniforms and much more. Being involved on a competitive youth sports team can get very expensive very quickly.

**2. Minimal free time.**

When a youth athlete decides to make the jump from regular league or recreational sports to a competitive travel time, they are going to lose a lot of their free time. Chances are they won’t have time to get too involved in other sports or extracurricular activities, and nights and weekends are going to be booked all season long. Even the off-season could be filled with strength and conditioning requirements.

**3. Pressure to perform.**

If your youth athlete wants to be on a competitive sports team, make sure they understand that the demand to perform is a lot higher than they might expect. Travel teams usually hold tryouts and are only looking for the best athletes. They are expected to make that team a priority over other activities and always be on top of their game.