Interacting with an ADHD Athlete

The sports environment provides many opportunities for the ADHD athlete to have successful interactions in a positive learning environment that may feel different than an academic environment. Although participation in athletics can provide these positive experiences, it is important for parents to keep in mind that they are key in the experiences of young athletes with ADHD and how they interact with them is important.

Some things for parents to remember when interacting with their ADHD athlete:

- Athletics is an opportunity for you to see your child be successful and go further than some labels say he/she can, try to help make this experience as positive as you can by providing unconditional support.

- Positive feedback is important: always find something positive to say to them about their effort or attitude (regardless of victory).

- Improved skill development should be rewarded: again, reward each increment of success along the way.

- Being a good team member can help shift perceptions of those adults in the athlete’s larger social network; encourage your child to be a selfless and supportive member of his/her team.

Working with a Sport Psychology Consultant can assist your ADHD child to maximize his or her potential as an athlete. The individual attention that a consultant can provide an athlete with ADHD can help encourage their personal and athletic development.

Working with a Sport Psychology Consultant can help your child:

- Become aware of and build on strengths.

- Have an opportunity to excel.

- Improve “on the field” performance.

- Learn specific tools to help with focus for sports and other aspects of life.

- Develop tools that can transfer to school, work, etc, and as a result you can see improvements in their self-confidence.

At the Center for Sport Psychology and Performance Excellence at the University of North Texas, we have a dedicated staff of sport consultants who can help parents and athletes learn
to work more effectively with symptoms of ADHD. For more information please call us at 940-369-7767 or visit our website at www.sportpsych.unt.edu or email us at sportpsych@unt.edu. As always, we leave you with our sport quote of the week:

“Children have more need of models than of critics” – Carolyn Coats

(Some information taken from Rhodius, Bernstein, Carlson, & Sugarman, 2006 AAASP Conference, Miami, FL)