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Changing the Game: The Parent's Guide to Raising Happy, High Performing Athletes, and Giving Youth Sports Back to our Kids

By John O'Sullivan

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Conventional wisdom holds that youth sports are a positive experience for our children. Unfortunately, 70% of kids drop out of organized athletics by the age of 13. Most of these children quit because our youth sports culture has taken the 'play' out of 'play ball.' A shift in values, the rise of expensive youth sports models, and the myth of abundant athletic scholarships has led parents and coaches to focus on wins instead of enjoyment, and trophies at the expense of development. As a result, every day increasing numbers of children quit playing sports that are no longer enjoyable. Conventional wisdom is wrong.

In *Changing the Game*, John O'Sullivan draws upon three decades of high level playing and coaching experience to take us behind the scenes of competitive youth sports, and demonstrates how they have changed from being a fun pastime to an ultra competitive, adult centered enterprise that is failing our children. He then teaches parents that the secret to raising happy, high performing children begins by helping them attain a positive mindset, and an enjoyable youth sports environment. By following seven actionable principles of high performance, parents can give their children a competitive edge, while at the same time making youth sports a positive experience for their family, their community, and their country.

"The romance is gone, the fun has disappeared, and children no longer simply 'play' sports," says O'Sullivan. *Changing the Game* is a call to action to reverse this trend. It will change how you think about youth sports. It will teach you the secrets of high performance. It will help your children to perform better. And it will put the "play" back in "play ball" for all of our young athletes. Are you ready to take action? Are you ready to change the game?

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Editorial Review

Review

The future of our children in sports lies in the hands of parents, coaches, and themselves. This book provides tools and tips to accelerate positive youth development experiences, as well as critical life lessons along the way.

Changing the Game serves as a powerful guide for both parents and coaches who want kids to have fun, enjoyable, and meaningful youth sporting experiences. The 7 Cs section is a must-read for every coach and parent. Many of the lessons and values in this book are timeless and will make a significant impact for everyone involved in youth sports. I highly recommend it! ---**John Ballantine**, president and co-founder, KIDS in the GAME, www.kitg.org

Changing the Game is, well, a game changer. It explores in both depth and breadth the youth sports experience, its blood, sweat, and tears. Any parent who wants their children to gain the physical, psychological, emotional, and social benefits of what sport has to offer (and isn't that every parent!) better read this book. It will make you a better sports parent, and it will ensure that your children get all the good stuff and avoid most of the bad stuff from participating in sports. ---**Jim Taylor**, Ph.D., author of *Positive Pushing: How to Raise a Successful and Happy Child*

Nobody cares more about the integrity of youth sports than John O'Sullivan. . .and that is reflected in his great new book, *Changing the Game*. ---**Dan Saferstein**, Ph.D., author of *Win or Lose: A Guide to Sports Parenting and Strength in You: A Student-Athlete's Guide to Competition and Life*

I would like to commend John O'Sullivan for this thoughtful and detailed work. I firmly believe that the youth sport experience for a child is shaped as powerfully by their parents or guardians involvement. That involvement by definition is neither a good nor bad thing. Rather the importance of that involvement needs to be appreciated and then it needs to be intelligently managed. In this book John gives practical and helpful guidance to elevating the experience of the children in youth sports by directly addressing the role of the parent or guardian. I think this book helps the ongoing challenge of making youth sports fun and safe as well as somewhere talent can be developed whatever the level. ---**Ian Barker**, Director of Coaching of Education, National Soccer Coaches Association of America

Changing the Game is full of practical, insightful information that is good for parents and coaches alike. ---**Tim Schulz**, president and CEO, Rush Soccer

Parenting an athlete is not as simple as it used to be. John O'Sullivan has clearly and professionally illuminated this challenging path with both research and common-sense advice. This book will help your athlete reach their full potential and allow you to be part of their good memories. ---**Bruce Brown**, founder of Proactive Coaching LLC and author of *Teaching Character through Sport and Proactive Leadership*

As the youth sports landscape has changed over the years, it has left parents oftentimes grasping for air at what to do to help their kids succeed. In my work with younger athletes, it is necessary to devote some of the time to the parents so they can help their kids to improve their mindset, focus, and confidence. As I read John's book, each chapter reminded me specifically of several of my current and former athletes, what they were going through, and their parents' role in the process. *Changing the Game* is a wonderful resource for

parents to help their young athletes succeed in sports and life, and I can't recommend it enough ---**Brian Baxter**, director, Sport Psychology Institute Northwest, and author of *The Sports Mindset Gameplan: An Athlete's Guide to Building and Maintaining Confidence*

John O'Sullivan's approach to parenting high-performing athletes is insightful, comprehensive, and effective. He provides practical and relevant principles that can improve communication and understanding between parent and child. His approach helps foster growth and strengthen core family values; most importantly it reminds parents that organized sports is supposed to be fun. *Changing the Game* is a must read for parents who want to take an interactive role in raising confident and well-rounded athletes. ---**Albert Oppedisano**, Psy.D, author of *Education and Empowerment for the 21st Century Parent*

Changing the Game offers invaluable insights into the reality of the youth sports world and the critical impact that parents have to make or break their kids' experience in sports. John O'Sullivan's thoughtful approach and guidance is spot on and just what we parents and coaches need to help our kids thrive on a field, on a team, and in the game of life! ---**Brian Grossman**, co-founder of KIDS in the GAME

Thank you to John O'Sullivan for providing a wonderful resource to parents of athletes. With such a changing climate of youth sports today, this book provides a guide for parents that brings the focus back on what is truly important for a child participating in sports. ---**Angela Hucles**, two-time Olympic Gold Medalist and founder of the Empowerment Through Sport Leadership Series

Changing the Game should be required for all youth sports parents. This guide offers ways for youth sports organizations to make sure that no child walks around with a hole in their heart. If youth sports organizations implemented this book within their educational efforts we would perhaps see more children involved in athletics beyond the age of fourteen! ---**Vince Ganzberg**, U.S. Soccer National Staff Instructor and co-founder of GK Project

About the Author

John O'Sullivan is the founder of the Changing the Game Project, and currently coaches for the Portland Timbers Youth Academy of Major League Soccer. For the past two decades he has been a successful soccer coach on the youth, high school and collegiate level. He is a former NCAA Division I soccer player, and played professionally for the Wilmington Hammerheads of the USL. John speaks nationwide to coaches, parents and young athletes about developing athletic excellence and leadership within positive sporting environments. He is a 1994 graduate of Fordham University, and received his Masters Degree from the University of Vermont in 2003. John holds an "A" License from the US Soccer Federation and a National Youth Coaching License from US Youth Soccer.

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