

“Most of us have far more courage than we ever dreamed we possessed.” Dale Carnegie

## **Why Do 70% of Teenage Athletes Drop Out?**

Sports participation can have a phenomenal positive impact on children and teenagers. As they grow

towards adulthood, sports can teach a number of life skills such as commitment, perseverance, time management, etc. It also allows them to develop good psychological and nutritional habits, keeps them fit and healthy, and also builds their social skills through their interactions with peers and authority figures.



Despite all the benefits that can be gained from participating in sports, there is a disturbing statistic showing that up to 70% of teenage athletes drop out of sports by the time they turn 13 years old. Why exactly is that?

## **Sports is Fun**

The most essential ingredient in sports participation is fun. Children and teenagers have to go to school and take part in other activities they probably view more as a chore than anything else. Sports can be an escape from that; a time for them to experience the fun of competing alongside their friends or making new friends.

There are three major factors that influence how enjoyable a sport is and affect whether or not a child drops out. These are friends and social life, level of success and talent, and pressure.

## **Friends and Social Life**



Anybody who has played a team sport will have some mention of the team camaraderie in determining how good (or bad) their experience was. Being part of a team is a special experience, and for many teenagers some of their best friends are their teammates. From taking trips together to locker room pranks and inside jokes, there are many scenarios that build deep bonds.

The increasingly competitive nature of teenage sports might result in your child being split up from his or her friends. For example, your child may not be chosen for the same team as his or her friends, who might be more advanced than he or she is. Due to this, your child might decide to join a new team, but having to form new bonds, especially for those who are shy, can leave them feeling isolated and wanting to quit. It is also possible that your teenager has been chosen for the new elite team, leaving many of his or her friends behind. In this scenario, they may not feel accepted by their peers on their new team and consequently suffer from declining levels of enjoyment that make them want to quit.

Teens are also undergoing a change in priorities and they may realize that sports is getting in the way of them socializing with others. The sacrifices of missed nights out with friends or missed trips in order to train or play games might not be something they want to do anymore. At this early age, it can be hard for them to see the long-term life benefits they will gain from being involved in high school athletics.

## Level of Success and Talent

Feeling talented and successful can go a long way towards building your teen's confidence, as well as their enjoyment of the sport. It is easier to enjoy doing something if you think you are good at it, simply because this makes you feel good about yourself.

For an athlete who is cut from a team, they may begin to question whether or not they should continue and if it's all worth the hassle. This could be especially true for teenage athletes who also have other talents or interests they enjoy just as much. Dropping out of sports can become an option they seriously consider.

If your teen doesn't get cut, but is for example, a consistent [bench player](#), this can be another problem that can increase the drop-out rate. This athlete might begin to compare themselves to their peers and determine that they are not as successful or talented and have little chance to be in the future.

Ultimately, they may decide that the sacrifices of training and going on trips to games are not worth the effort just to be a substitute and therefore, end up leaving the sport.

For those who are less skilled, but decide to stick it out because they thoroughly enjoy being involved, this can present another problem. Teenage sports have become increasingly geared toward catering for elite level talent. The opportunities for athletes of a lesser skill level are slimmer, with no recreational leagues they can be involved in past a certain age. This is another factor in declining interest and dropping out of a sport, as teenagers may just want to play in a fun team environment.



## Pressure



Due to the emphasis on elite athletes in many sports, the importance of winning becomes even more pronounced entering the teenage years. Usually at this stage the more talented athletes are being identified and trained more rigorously. While some of these elite level athletes may desire to be in environments that will push them a bit more, others may begin to feel that the sport is now less fun than it was before and decide to quit.

Another issue can occur if teen athletes feel they have lost ownership of their own sporting experience due to the intense and invasive behaviors of coaches or even parents. For parents, it may be a case of trying to live vicariously through your child, constantly critiquing or coaching from the sidelines or post-game and smothering your child's growth in the game. Such actions will affect how thoroughly they enjoy the sport, turning it into a chore instead of an escape. At this point, it will be much easier for them to decide on leaving the sport behind.

If your student-athlete does decide to stop playing a sport, be sure that you insist they fill that time commitment with a new sport or other productive activity.