



# Just Let 'em Play: Guiding Parents, Coaches and Athletes Through Youth Sports

*Andrew Jacobs, Peter D. Malone, Jeff Montgomery, With Matt Fulks*

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The world of youth and high school sports has grown tremendously during the past decade, and with this growth has come a flood of questions for everyone involved - from parents to players, and coaches to administrators. Questions such as, why would I want my child involved in sports? What is the appropriate age to begin playing and competing? When should winning and losing become important? What should you do if you disagree with your child's coach about playing time? What should I do if my child wants to quit? How can the youth sports experience be fun? These questions - and many more - are addressed head-on in *Just Let 'Em Play: Guiding Parents, Coaches and Athletes Through Youth Sports*.

Renowned sport psychologist Dr. Andrew Jacobs, longtime Major League Baseball pitcher Jeff Montgomery, and Hall of Fame swimming coach Peter Malone have seen first-hand the issues that are making youth sports increasingly difficult for parents, coaches, officials, and especially kids to navigate. Jacobs' clients, who range from elementary school to professional athletes, regularly talk to him about burnout - even before high school. Montgomery, who almost walked away from baseball after four years in the minor leagues, stuck with it and went on to become a three-time American League All-Star and the 1993 A.L. Reliever of the Year during a 13-year major-league career. He learned about today's win-at-all-costs mentality while coaching youth baseball for almost a decade. Peter D. Malone coached more than 10,000 swimmers during his 44-year career. During his last 35 years of coaching, he was the general manager and head coach of the Kansas City Blazers, a program featuring swimmers from recreational to Olympic levels. He coached four Olympic gold medalists.

In July 2013, *Time* magazine published an article titled *Final Four for the 4-Foot Set*. The article describes a national AAU basketball tournament - for second graders. In the article, one of the coaches states he tells his kids he's going to treat them as full-grown 14-year-olds, because this isn't baby ball.

Indeed, it is not. It's a group of eight-year-olds.

Bucking this trend, Dr. Jacobs, Montgomery, and Malone continue to teach lessons youth sports have taught for generations - working with others for the team's sake; hard work and commitment; setting and achieving goals; learning how to win; learning how to lose or to fail; respecting coaches and officials; coaches and officials serving as strong role models for young athletes; and, most importantly, having fun.

***In Just Let 'Em Play: Guiding Parents, Coaches, and Athletes through Youth Sports, Dr. Jacobs, Montgomery, and Malone utilize decades of experience and training with amateur and professional athletes to explain the importance of winning and losing, success and failure; why it's okay that not every athlete receive a trophy; and the role of parents, coaches, officials, and athletes.***

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