



WPNA Netball Talk for Parents

PAGE 1

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WPNA is independent and affiliated to Netball South Africa

Our Netball Talk is set out in a user-friendly manner in order to reach more parents. We wish to, by sharing knowledge, enable parents to support their daughters in a more effective way regarding their netball. It is compiled from experience; no aids are used and it should serve as a guide, even if you may disagree. There are many aspects to this topic; however, we are going to cover only a few of these, with focus mainly on netball participation. No two children are the same, and we refer to the average expected emotional development of children.

Just some of my **background** info: I played for the SA Netball team - this also provides parents with much more trust in the organization. All my life I have been playing netball, and yet I learn and develop each day, even emotionally. The latter forms the basis of the interaction with the school coaches.

A. YOUR ROLE AS PARENT REGARDING YOUR DAUGHTER

1. You want to raise her **holistically**, without unbalanced and abnormal focus on netball. The most important aspect is her relationship with Jesus and to establish her faith, otherwise even the most basic problematic situations can upset her.
2. We also want our daughters to be able to **stand on their ground, and to act assertively**. This also means that they will have to learn early on that teammates and opponents should not **dominate** them. This characteristic enables daughters to handle their own problematic situations. Encourage your daughter to verbalize her concerns as soon as possible, rather than you having to do so. For example, from U/14 the intervention of a parent is not tolerated at all, while it is expected of the players to discuss their grievances with the coaches themselves. Simultaneously, you should encourage your daughter not to be passive regarding "friends that are rude to me during netball", because life is full of people acting in an unfair and uncalled for manner towards you.
3. In netball it is all about **judgement**. The girls must be able to determine what is acceptable behavior, bad behavior, when to praise, and when to disregard behavior. This skill can be greatly copied by the behavior of parents in similar situations that occur in front of the children. Jealousy is fundamentally not accepted.
4. We also want your daughter to **display acceptable behaviour within the community**. She must be courteous to her teammates and has to respect her coach. She must also display **constant behavior patterns**: Many girls display negative behaviour at school and not at home: some are rude and disruptive throughout, some only during matches, and the most cunning ones only when the teacher or coach is not nearby or does not hear!
It is a very good idea to appoint 'watchdogs', be it friends at school and/or parents who attend all practices, for they can inform you in case your 'angel' misbehaves. Sometimes, when a child is so irritating and rude to the others, she gets it in full force when other parents decide to take her on personally, while you were unaware of the development of a negative behavior pattern. Children surely must make mistakes, but beware of a negative behavioral pattern getting out of control. Teachers and coaches are not always aware of the problems amongst the children. Time and time again after a practice session we hear of upset parents who phone about their crying children. Your child can behave in a negative way, and believe me, angels can become little devils and angels once again, all in the space of one day!
5. **Femininity**: Some of our daughters are too refined, others are too rough in their behaviors. Some girls, as they become stronger, also become less feminine, and that should be prevented. Focus on the way they carry themselves, do not give up, even if they moan. Femininity is fundamental in the self-image of children in their teenage years. On the court she has to play physically hard, (within the rules) and must be a fighter. She also does not have to chat to her opponent or even know what she looks like, but off the court she must always be a lady.
6. Your desire should only be that your daughter **achieves success within her own abilities**. Your daughter's talents are a gift from God; therefore you should not be disappointed in His work. Beware then of setting unrealistic and unattainably high standards for your daughter, and...

- a. Your child may already know whether you **excelled in sports at school or not**. She might think that she too must succeed, or might fail in sport. Raise her to believe that she is her own person, and that she can only do her best.
- b. **Children have varying developmental rhythms**. Some develop fast, then slow, then fast again, while others take time to develop, sometimes only when they are u/11, or even u/16.
- c. **Keep privacy in mind when discussing your daughter's abilities or achievements**, because she might then only want to stay in that category, or might experience pressure to remain in the strong category

PAGE 2

7. It is important that you, and not the teacher, should **educate your child about winning and losing**. Winning is participation in sport and good behavior, losing is the direct opposite. The score has no relevance to winning or losing. Cultivate this thought pattern from an early age: do not ask if she had won, and if she made the A-team, rather ask if she had enjoyed it, and if there was something she struggled with, but got right eventually. Praise her for her participation.

The emphasis parents put on winning is given through to the coach with immense consequences, e.g. the main purpose of Mini-Netball always was enjoyment and experiencing all the positions. However, due to the pressure to win, schools no longer apply the swapping rules and thus certain players are at a disadvantage for always having to play in the boring positions, or even worse: always having to sit out for half a match.

The winning and losing mind set resulted in me thinking, as a 27-year-old, that there was something wrong with me if the team I coached lost. I also experienced it emotionally, so I have empathy if you take it personally should your daughters' team lose. However, you and your daughter must distance yourself from that. Somewhere in the world there are most likely to be stronger opponents, so match results are highly relative.

B. YOUR ROLE AS PARENT TOWARDS THE SCHOOL:

1. **Paying school fees due to government regulation does not give you permission to act like a client** and demand the very best of everything, because if you continue to moan, you should, like a typical client, take your child to another school. Beware of criticism regarding the school's standard of coaching etc. This is unnecessary, because schools are unfortunately soft targets to criticize. Accepting the coaching standard will make it so much easier for all involved.
2. No school will put any netball player to a disadvantage on purpose. **Netball appointments in vacant teaching positions** do not exist either, as there are too many roles a teacher must be able to fulfil to be appointed. A strong netball coach on the school staff is only a bonus, not a requisite.
3. **Just as you are not a perfect parent, so too there is no perfect school**. An attitude of gratitude, support and the willingness to help the headmaster and his staff creates an atmosphere in which these people can continue their work of love, thus providing your daughter with the best opportunities within their abilities.

C. YOUR ROLE AS PARENT TOWARDS YOUR DAUGHTER'S COACH:

In this day and age, the workload on teachers is much bigger than when we were children:

- a. They rest less and are on their feet much longer during school time (It's hectic!).
- b. They have to handle more disobedient children than when we were young.
- c. They have to handle social work related problems.
- d. They have to handle children with diverse abilities in class.
- e. They experience greater pressure from parents because greater emphasis is being placed on achievements.
- f. They often have to fulfil the role of parent as well!

At the end of a school day one cannot expect that a netball practise should mirror that of a model-practise. The coach might be late, coach in high heels, the only needle in the school might be broken and all the balls might still be deflated, etc.

How do we handle a netball teacher, and how do we intervene?

1. First and foremost, **praise her** before she goes on to the court, and thank the dear Lord that there is someone to coach your child. It is already a privilege to have a coach- you cannot expect more. If she shows up, it's great.
2. Beware of a **stern facial expression** while you are relaxing and looking at how your daughter is practising. Remember the smile, otherwise the coach might think that you disapprove her coaching, and this places immense pressure on her, especially on the young and/or inexperienced coaches.

3. **Always greet your coach first and always thank her afterwards**, even from a distant. Most coaches do not greet first, because their minds are on coaching, or because they shy away from parents (young and/or inexperienced coaches do not have enough confidence in their coaching) or worse: because parents have criticised them before.

PAGE 3

4. **Coaches do not interfere with your marriage; so do not interfere with team selection.** Unlike sports like athletics and swimming, netball does not have logistic indicators regarding who should play in which position. For example, within a strong talent-pool selection, 80% of the selectors will think alike, with a 20% margin for different opinions, and we have to accept the decision of the coach. Because the coach is in control of and responsible for that team.
5. **There are various factors influencing team selection**, and every coach has the right to select a team as she sees fit from the 'ingredients' set out below:
- Height, agility, ball sense, elevation, explosive power, BMT (Big Match Temperament) vs. folding under pressure, social behaviour, emotional level, body control, game history of previous years, being present for practice and matches, pressure from parents where team selection is determined to avoid conflict with difficult parents (this happens with inexperienced coaches).
 - Team selection cannot change every week. Players must be given the opportunity to prove themselves in several matches. Please note that only strong/challenging opponents can be true indicators, and truly strong matches are not often played at the beginning of a season.
6. **Coaches do not have to explain team selection to parents:** It only makes sense that a player who does not make a team must work harder at all the sections as set out above in order to make that team. A parent who asks for explanations puts tremendous pressure on the coaches, because she cannot give a detailed explanation due to the fact that the standard of play of the players, who compete with her daughter, may not be discussed. Give the coach room to do what she has to do, and be assured that she will do no less than her very best regarding the selection of the team.
7. **Objections:** First decide if you can truly object! Then follow the right channels. Do not speak to the coach during or just after a practice. Write a letter to her. Should the problem not be resolved, send a copy of your first letter to the Netball Organiser enclosed with a new letter. If you are still unhappy, send a copy of both letters with another letter to the Sports Organiser, only then should you send a letter to the headmaster with your 3 copies. Do not immediately approach the headmaster, even if your daughter is hysterical about an incident, as this sends a message that the coach is not in control, subsequently hurting more feelings.

D. PARENTS AND SPECTATOR BEHAVIOR:

*These suggestions are for practices and matches:

1. **Praise both teams** and all players who excel. Use words like "way to go, Center, well played, well defended" etc. Do not shout your daughter's name out loud all the time.
2. **Never put your foot within the lines of the netball court**, unless you are being called. Should your daughter have forgotten her shoes at home and you arrive at the court, she then may only come to you during her water break.
3. **NO coaching.** Even if your daughter is on a wrong spot on the court! It is HER match, and you can only watch while she is playing. She is the one who must make the decisions, not you. Therefore: no "Defend!"; "Stick with your opponent!"; "Throw harder balls!"; "You're messing around!"
4. **Parents who attend infrequently** must try to be verbally strong, even if it is not in their nature. This supports the child for when they are not there.
5. **Partial, one-sided and inexperienced referees** are part and parcel of sport, and they will always be there. Ignore it in totality. Should you feel that something is unfair, then keep in mind that life is unfair. Parents, if you think you can do better: there is a huge need for qualified referees, become one!
6. **Never criticise your child in front of others**, as it is a traumatic experience.
7. **Have a calm and friendly facial expression.** This serves as an example for everyone on how to handle pressure. Netball teams and individuals do not play badly on purpose, and some days nothing seems to gel. You just keep on smiling.

E. GENERAL INFORMATION FOR YOUR ATTENTION:

PAGE 4

1. Post Lengths: u/7 - u/10: **2,5m** and **3,05m** for older players. Ball Size: u/7 - u/9: Size 4. U/10+: Size 5. A freestanding pole is much better for practice than a ring fixed to a wall. Need a pole? Call Adélé 083 629 2495. Her lightweight portable poles are great, galvanization is costly.
2. Most **matches** for Mini-Netball takes place during the second Netball Term, u/14+ from March.
3. Provincial teams: A strong quota-system is enforced with often poor selectors. Trial players therefore must be thankful for the opportunity to partake, give their best and do not expect more. The amount of rounds to which the players proceed is not an indication that a player is better than those who have fallen out earlier.
4. Please inform the coach (for ex. via the school's secretary) should your daughter fall ill and **cannot attend a practice session**, and if she will be healthy enough for Saturday's match or the next practice.
5. **Team selection is the most difficult with the u/10 players**, due to the fact that those players are playing set positions for the first time. Give it some time, it can even take up to 3 years (for example) to sort out a school's A-team and this causes a ripple effect, even into the lowest teams.
6. **The unluckiest girl** is the one who is the star in her team, but there is just not place for her in a higher team. This forms an integral part of sport and life in general. The secret is to be ready should the opportunity to progress present itself.
7. **The number of players in a team** (Mini Netball: 8 per team (**some play 7 = great!**) & Junior Netball: 7 per team) influences the division of players when they reach u/10, e.g. one previous year u/9A player moves down the next year to u/10B, 2 u/9B players then moves down to u/10C and 3 u/9C players to u/10D etc. The most nervous time for a trial player is u/14... first time in **BIG** High School!
8. **Gifts and notes of thanks** motivate the coaches to put in more effort. The opposite is also true. Invest in happy coaches at your school, even if teams move to new coaches every year.
9. If you want **extra coaching assistance** for your daughter's school team (**WPNA has such a service, please enquire**), please do so very diplomatically as some school team coaches are open to such a suggestion, others are not.
10. Parents who present **netball skills at home** greatly enhance the abilities of the daughter. Extra netball coaching will make a tremendous difference and will contribute greatly to positive development and self-image. Progress is linked to talent, but practice makes perfect!
11. **Top teams get the top coaches on offer.** This is a natural process within all sports. Should your daughter play in the CD team, then her coach might not be as experienced as the AB team coach, and your daughter's development might be slower than the AB team. So too are matches not that frequent in the lower teams. This is a natural occurrence to which little can be done, so please accept the fact that not everyone can play in the AB teams.
12. **The netball standard in South African schools is very high**, and there need not be any stepping back as far as Australia and New Zealand is concerned. It is only on senior level (after school) due to political and economical reasons that we experience difficulties to achieve. The talent pool for the SA Netball teams is also getting smaller mainly because the love for "outside"-netball after school is decreasing.

We wish you all the best as a parent! Feel free to contact us should you have any questions, are unhappy or even if you want to boast! We are independent and treat all conversations with parents as confidential.

Kind regards

Eleanor van Staden & Coaches

