

Youth Lacrosse Stakeholder Sentiments (2024–2025)

Overview: Online discussions from 2024–2025 reveal that **coaches, parents, and players in youth lacrosse** (primarily U.S., with some global input) share many recurring concerns. Each group voices **pain points** and frustrations, describes **failed approaches** they’ve tried, and envisions **dream outcomes** for a better youth lacrosse experience. Below, we break down key themes for each stakeholder group, supported by direct quotes from forums (Reddit, parenting boards, etc.) to reflect the authentic language and sentiments in these communities. Summary tables and trend analyses are included for quick reference.

Coaches

Coaches of youth lacrosse teams often find themselves **juggling player development, parent expectations, and team management challenges**. They frequently discuss problems like unmotivated players or difficult parents, reflect on strategies that fell flat, and describe the positive team environment and progress they hope to achieve.

Pain Points/Challenges

- **Lack of Player Commitment and Focus:** Coaches struggle with kids missing practice or not putting in effort. One U12 coach lamented that *“we have kids that don’t show up to practice and others that, even when they do show up, have terrible attitudes and literally do not try.”* [reddit.com](#) Another coach of U14 girls was frustrated that *“They don’t listen unless they want to. Candy doesn’t motivate either.”* – standard tricks like rewards weren’t getting through. Such comments reflect a broader frustration that many young players lack discipline or drive, making it hard to teach fundamentals.
- **Parental Interference and Unrealistic Expectations:** Youth coaches often feel undermined by parents. As one coach quipped, **“I welcome any parent who wants to donate 30+ hrs a week to plan, execute and enjoy coaching youth lacrosse.”** [reddit.com](#) The implication is clear: parents who second-guess coaches often don’t appreciate the huge time commitment coaches already give. In some cases, coaches feel *“parents have a problem with [me]”*, as one coach who was also a lacrosse dad admitted, noting **“youth sports are cut throat some times”** due to overzealous parents [reddit.com](#). There’s a recurring theme of coaches battling the *“daddy ball”* phenomenon – i.e. parents (or parent-coaches) pushing for their own kids’ success at the expense of team fairness [reddit.com](#). All of this creates tension and distracts from player development.
- **Discipline vs. Enjoyment Dilemma:** Many coaches are torn between instilling discipline and keeping the game fun. For example, a military-background head coach wanted to link playing time to practice effort as a “life lesson,” but met resistance from league organizers who felt that *“kids and families can do whatever they want... as long as they*

don't quit the game." [reddit.com](#) Coaches see this lenient approach as undermining accountability. Yet they also know being too strict can backfire; one coach observed that if practice is all punishment and no play, you *"start things off poorly and you already lose people."* [reddit.com](#) The challenge is finding balance: enforcing effort and improvement without making kids hate coming to practice.

Trend Analysis: The dominant coach complaints revolve around **motivation and distractions** – unengaged players and intrusive parents. Coaches talk about wanting to teach fundamentals and life lessons, but say they are frequently sidetracked by having to deal with poor attendance, short attention spans, or parent politics. It's a common refrain that *"It's hard to coach"* under these conditions [reddit.com](#). Coaches on forums swap advice on handling these issues while still giving kids a positive experience.

What They've Tried That Didn't Work

- **Bribes and Gimmicks:** In an effort to get kids to pay attention or hustle, some coaches have tried incentive programs (like candy for good behavior) or fun rewards. As noted above, *"Candy doesn't motivate"* a lot of kids past a certain point. Coaches report that extrinsic rewards or gimmicks often fall flat with today's youth, who *"don't listen unless they want to"*. In short, if the players aren't internally interested, no amount of lollipops will instill real effort.
- **Excessive Conditioning/Punishment:** A number of coaches admit to leaning on old-school conditioning drills or punishments (like excessive running) to whip kids into shape – with mixed results. One JV player's comment highlights this backfiring: *"practice consists of running laps... a lot of running... always dread going to practice"* [reddit.com](#). This suggests coaches who only run kids ragged end up with exhausted, unenthused players. Another coach gave an example of trying to personally jog alongside an out-of-shape 12U player to encourage him, but *"We've actually tried to run with him to encourage him to no avail... he walks [anyway]."* [reddit.com](#). The coach concluded that approach wasn't working and even sighed, *"I blame the parents more than the kids"* for such lack of effort [reddit.com](#). The takeaway: punitive conditioning or trying to *force* effort often doesn't fix the underlying attitude problems – it can even make practice a "slog" that kids want to avoid.
- **Ignoring or Arguing with Problem Parents:** Some coaches mention attempts to ignore overbearing parents or, conversely, to confront them, but these measures rarely improve the situation. Simply tuning parents out can let small issues fester into bigger conflicts. On the flip side, trying to appease every parent request can undermine the coach's authority or fairness to the team. One forum contributor cynically noted that meddling sports parents have been around forever – *"South Park was making fun of these people back in 2005... it's always been like this."* [reddit.com](#). In essence, there's no easy fix; coaches who responded say they either set firm boundaries or invite parents to help (as in the 30+ hours comment above), but frustrations remain high when a few parents cross the line.

Trend Analysis: The unsuccessful tactics coaches discuss tend to have a common thread: they are one-size-fits-all or reactionary solutions to complex motivational problems. Whether it's **bribery, punishment, or avoidance**, these quick fixes haven't cured coaches' headaches. The consensus among experienced coaches is that none of these methods substitute for a more thoughtful approach – keeping practices engaging, communicating expectations clearly, and getting buy-in from both players and parents. As one seasoned coach reflected regarding discipline-heavy practices: sometimes “*you already lose people*” at the start [reddit.com](#), meaning the kids check out mentally. The lesson coaches share is that you can't *make* kids care by force; you have to inspire them to care.

Dream Outcomes

- **Enthusiastic, Coachable Players:** Every youth coach's dream is a team full of kids who **love to be there and are eager to learn**. They frequently say their goal is for players to *enjoy* lacrosse while improving. A Reddit lacrosse coach put it simply: “**Bottom line is youth lacrosse is meant to learn fundamentals and have fun.**” [reddit.com](#) Wins and trophies are secondary at the youth level – what coaches really want is to see kids develop skills and passion for the game. A coach who had spent years coaching his son and others reminded fellow coaches, “*remember the kids need to have fun.*” [reddit.com](#) When players are having fun, they hustle harder and listen better, making the coach's job rewarding. An ideal practice for these coaches is one where kids are laughing, learning new drills, and no one is “standing still” out of boredom [reddit.com](#).
- **Supportive Parents as Partners:** In a perfect world, parents would trust and assist coaches rather than challenge them. Coaches dream of parents who cheer positively, reinforce team values at home, and maybe even volunteer. “*I welcome any parent*” to help out [reddit.com](#), one coach said – the subtext being that understanding the coaching effort first-hand would reduce parent complaints. The ideal parent on the sidelines is one who respects the coaches' decisions and focuses on encouraging all the kids. Coaches often mention how nice it is when parents buy into the program philosophy (for example, prioritizing every player's development over just their own kid's stats). That kind of parent-coach unity creates a stable environment where the coach can do their job effectively, and everyone is on the same page about keeping things fun and constructive.
- **Team Culture of Growth and Fair Play:** Youth coaches also hope to build a **team culture** where beginners can grow and every kid gets a chance. Many explicitly value equal playing time and avoiding favoritism at young ages. “*Keep playing time as equal as you can in younger kids,*” advised one forum coach, emphasizing inclusion [reddit.com](#). The dream scenario is a team that improves over the season – kids picking up new skills, supporting each other, and showing good sportsmanship. Coaches love to see their players gain confidence and apply life lessons. One former coach reflected that when players themselves take initiative to improve, the results are fantastic: “*Most all of the kids I coached that [asked what they could do to get better] went on to achieve the goal they set out for, built their confidence, and loved the game even more.*” [reddit.com](#) Watching kids “love the game even more” as they grow is essentially the ideal outcome coaches work towards.

Trend Analysis: Across discussions, coaches describe an ultimate goal of **developing well-rounded young athletes** – kids who have strong fundamentals, a love for lacrosse, and positive attitudes. They imagine a scenario with **harmonious parent relations** and a team-first atmosphere. While reality may fall short, this vision guides many youth coaches’ decisions. It’s evident in comments like “*youth lacrosse is meant to...have fun*” [reddit.com](#) and stories of players gaining confidence and life skills through the sport. The consistency of these dreams (fun, fundamentals, friendships) suggests that at heart, even competitive coaches see youth lacrosse as a vehicle for personal growth and enjoyment, not just wins.

Summary Table – Coaches (Challenges, failed approaches, and desired outcomes frequently mentioned):

| Coaches’ Top Concerns | Approaches Tried (Failed) | Dream Outcomes |
|---|--|---|
| <i>Unmotivated or inattentive players</i> | - Bribes (e.g. candy rewards) – ineffective - Punitive conditioning (excessive) | - Players who love the game and put in effort reddit.com - Fun, engaging practices where kids |
| <i>Overbearing or uninvolved parents</i> | - Ignoring parent concerns – issues fester - Conceding to parent demands – undermines fairness (“daddy ball”) | - Supportive parents who trust coaches and reinforce team values reddit.com - Constructive parent involvement |
| <i>Discipline vs. development balance</i> | - Military-style strictness – kids tune out or rebel reddit.com - “Win-at-all-cost” mindset – not fitting for youth level | - Emphasis on growth and fundamentals over winning reddit.com - Fair play and equal opportunity, |

Parents

Parents of youth lacrosse players voice a mix of **concerns about their children’s experience, failed tactics in parenting or navigating teams, and hopes for their kids’ athletic journey**. Online, they candidly discuss everything from frustration with coaches or team politics to the lengths they’ve gone for their child – and what they truly wish for in the end (usually, their child’s happiness and development).

Pain Points/Challenges

- **Fear of Unfair Treatment or “Coach is Crapping on my Kid”:** A very common parental concern is that their child isn’t getting a fair shake – perhaps the coach is favoring other kids, or not recognizing their child’s talent. As one person put it, they’ve been “*the Parent who thinks a Coach is crapping on my kid.*” [reddit.com](#) This sentiment, echoed in many forums, comes from seeing a child get limited playing time or a position that doesn’t showcase them. In parent chats, you’ll often find statements akin to: “*My kid is better than [so-and-so] but he doesn’t get playing time – why not?*” [reddit.com](#). Parents agonize that politics or “coach’s favorites” might be holding their son or daughter back.

This **perception of bias** is a major pain point that can lead to tense parent-coach relationships.

- **High Costs & Low Returns (Travel Team Woes):** Especially in the U.S., club lacrosse can cost families thousands in fees and travel – so parents feel extra frustration if the experience falls short. It's not uncommon to hear about a parent shelling out for an elite travel team only to have their child sit on the bench or not improve. In one deleted Reddit post (widely discussed by commenters), a parent considered pulling their teen off a travel team because the kid was hardly playing despite being “a good player.” The stress of “*paying a lot and not seeing your kid on the field*” becomes a real sore point. As a former player recalled, “*I never knew my parents were stressed about it [at the time]... I would have been devastated if my parents pulled me off a team like that*” [reddit.com](#) – highlighting how parents grapple with whether to intervene or not. The **investment vs. outcome** imbalance (time, money, and emotion) is a recurring theme, and it intensifies when coupled with the fairness concerns above.
- **Child's Burnout or Loss of Interest:** Parents also painfully watch their kids lose passion for the sport. One parent on a forum wrote: “*It's getting to the point where he wants to quit lacrosse. He already quit baseball and said he hated track.*” [reddit.com](#) This kind of post is alarmingly common – a child who used to be active now wants to drop out of sports altogether. The **burnout** can come from feeling over-pressured or simply not enjoying the team they're on. Another parent shared, “*My kid is upset that no one on his team passes the ball... talks about quitting.*” [reddit.com](#) – a scenario where a child is so frustrated with team dynamics (teammates hogging the ball) that he's ready to give up. For parents, seeing their kid unhappy or discouraged in a sport that is supposed to be fun is a major heartache and challenge. They worry: Is the coach or team culture to blame? Are they themselves pushing too hard? This ties into a larger concern about **balancing encouragement with pressure**.
- **Dealing with Other “Crazy” Sports Parents:** Not only are they concerned about coaches, many reasonable parents are also stressed by the behavior of *other* parents at games. Accounts of sideline screaming, parents berating referees, or creating toxic environments abound. For example, one lacrosse dad described seeing a season ended early “*due to parents being abusive towards the refs*” and even a mom running onto the field to yell at an official [reddit.com](#). Parents have reported hearing other adults yell things like “*push players or fake injuries to run out the clock*” [reddit.com](#) at youth games. This **embarrassing and hostile atmosphere** is a pain point for the more level-headed parents who just want a supportive, safe environment for their kids. It's tough to explain to your child why some grown-ups are acting out of control. Good sportsmanship isn't only expected of players – parents feel the strain when others on the sidelines don't behave.

Trend Analysis: The threads show that parents' worries revolve around **protecting and supporting their child**. They are anxious about external factors hurting their kid's experience – unfair coaches, toxic team cultures, burnout, or out-of-control spectators. Underlying these is often a feeling of powerlessness: they're watching their child navigate a situation they can't fully

control. This leads to sleepless nights and heartfelt posts asking for advice: “Should I talk to the coach? Change teams? Back off?” The pain is real because it’s *their child* at stake. Parents repeatedly emphasize wanting their kid to be **happy, confident, and treated fairly**.

What They’ve Tried That Didn’t Work

- **Nagging and Pushing Too Hard:** A classic parent move – pushing a child to practice more or stick with the sport – often backfires. As one experienced lacrosse dad admitted, **“If you nag, especially with teens, they’re going to rebel... It’s what humans do.”** [reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com) Many parents confess that constantly telling a kid to “go hit the wall” (do lacrosse drills) or critiquing their every game leads to eye-rolls and resentment. In the online discussions, a common story is the parent who made their kid play or practice, only to have the child shut down or even quit. As that same parent wisely concluded, *“no one ever died or became a failure at life because they didn’t do enough lacrosse in the back yard.”* [reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com) In other words, pressuring kids with extra training often just stresses the family out and doesn’t instill genuine motivation.
- **Confronting Coaches or “Helicopter” Involvement:** Many parents recount marching up to a coach or league to address their grievances – such as complaining about playing time or strategy – and finding it accomplished little (or even had negative consequences). One coach on Reddit noted that when parents come to him with *“My kid is better than X, why aren’t they playing?”* [reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com), it usually doesn’t lead to a productive outcome. Coaches tend to dismiss these as biased viewpoints, and it can brand the child as someone with a high-maintenance parent. Similarly, trying to micro-manage the child’s sports life (switching teams at the first setback, demanding they get a certain position, etc.) can confuse or discourage the kid. Several families shared stories of team-hopping to find the “right fit,” only to encounter new issues elsewhere. The hard truth from veteran sports parents: intervening too much can undermine a child’s ability to overcome challenges on their own.
- **Over-Scheduling and Over-Investing:** In an attempt to help their child succeed, some parents put them in multiple leagues, private lessons, year-round play, and so on. The intent is good – more exposure should equal more skill – but many found it led to burnout. The child who plays fall, winter, spring lacrosse with no break may end up **hating the sport**. Likewise, spending a lot on top-tier travel teams before the kid is ready can blow up. If the child isn’t a standout, they might languish on the bench while the family spends every weekend traveling. Parents on forums have noted that chasing elite status too early was a mistake; one thread debated *“Do you **need** to play travel sports?”*, with a consensus that **development and fun matter more at youth ages** and travel should come when the time is right [reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com) [reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com). In hindsight, parents see that trying to rush their 11-year-old into being a lacrosse superstar didn’t yield the desired results – instead it often sapped the joy from the game.

Trend Analysis: The “lessons learned” from parents in these discussions center on **restraint and perspective**. Parents have tried the overbearing approaches – nagging, complaining, overloading – and discovered that these usually drive their kids *away* rather than toward success. A short

trend analysis in the community shows a bit of a course-correction: parents advising each other to *step back*, focus on encouragement, and let the kids take ownership. The phrase “*let them fail now, so they succeed later*” comes up in essence. By sharing what didn’t work, parents are collectively moving toward a mindset of supporting rather than pushing.

Dream Outcomes

- **Happy, Healthy, and Enjoying the Game:** Above all, parents want their children to **love what they’re doing**. The ideal scene for any sports parent is seeing their kid come off the field sweaty and smiling, eager to tell them about a great play or asking to toss a ball around at home. One parent on a youth sports forum poignantly asked, “*What school provides the best team culture where girls really have fun and enjoy being on the team?*” durbanmom.com Fun and enjoyment are paramount. Parents dream of their kids having such a positive experience that they *want* to go to practice and games. No parent likes the car-ride home when a child is in tears or angry. The dream outcome is the **opposite**: a child who can’t wait for the next lacrosse session and who is smiling, gaining confidence through the season.
- **A Fair, Supportive Team Environment:** Parents also yearn for their kids to be in an environment that is **inclusive and supportive**. They love when a team feels like a family. One mother noted her daughter chose a high school program because she saw in a recruiting video that a girl was “*genuinely happy for another player when they scored*” – and that resonated since “*she’s always the player looking for a stick click after a great play.*” durbanmom.com (“Stick click” refers to tapping sticks in celebration – a little sign of team camaraderie.) This quote captures parents’ dreams that their child is surrounded by teammates who celebrate each other’s successes and coaches who foster camaraderie. An ideal team has **no drama or bullying**, just kids working together and forming friendships. Parents often say they hope their child makes “friends for life” through sports – seeing those bonds form is a huge reward. A positive culture also means their child feels **valued** on the team, even if they’re not the star.
- **Personal Growth and Life Lessons:** Beyond the season at hand, parents have big-picture hopes that youth lacrosse will contribute to their child’s development off the field. They want sports to teach resilience, work ethic, and leadership. One coach-turned-parent put it beautifully to reassure a worried father: “**This game is incredible and can build lifelong skills off the field as well as lifelong friendships... even if your son isn’t the star.**” reddit.com Parents dream that through lacrosse, their kids will learn to overcome adversity, be part of something bigger than themselves, and gain confidence. Whether it’s learning to take constructive criticism, managing time with school and sports, or bouncing back from a tough loss, these are the experiences parents truly value. Many have the hope (sometimes unspoken) that if their child can handle the ups and downs of lacrosse, they’ll be better prepared for life. And if athletic accolades come, that’s icing on the cake – but the **character building** is the core wish.
- **Achievements and Opportunities:** Of course, parents wouldn’t mind seeing some tangible success as well – making the varsity team, earning a scholarship, or simply

seeing noticeable improvement. A “dream” outcome might be their child scoring their first goal after weeks of practice, or the team winning a championship *while still having fun*. For some, an ultimate dream is their child getting recruited to a college program. But even those conversations on forums come with the caveat that the child’s passion must lead the way. The common ground is parents want doors to open for their kids. If lacrosse can help them get into a good college or teach them to set and achieve goals, that dream is fulfilled. As one commenter noted, when players take initiative, “*they set out [goals], built their confidence, and loved the game even more*” [reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com) – and that increased love for the game often translates into higher achievement. Thus, parents dream of that virtuous cycle: love of the game → hard work → success → even greater love and life opportunities.

Trend Analysis: The optimistic vision parents share is remarkably consistent: they want **well-rounded happiness and growth** for their kids. In their ideal world, youth lacrosse is a positive force that keeps their children active, joyful, and learning important lessons. The discussions repeatedly return to words like *fun*, *confidence*, *friends*, and *fairness*. Even when college or elite ambitions are mentioned, they’re usually tempered with “as long as my kid is happy.” This indicates that, at the end of the day, **emotional and social outcomes trump trophies** for most youth lacrosse parents. They dream of being the proud parent on the sideline of a game where all the kids play hard and support each other – and then maybe go out for ice cream together afterward, with everyone in high spirits.

Summary Table – Parents:

| Parents’ Worries/ | Tried (but Didn’t Help) | Hopes and Dreams |
|---|--|--|
| <i>Unfair treatment by coaches</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complaining to coaches or league – seen as “that parent,” minimal change reddit.com - Team-hopping to escape politics – | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fair play and recognition for their child’s efforts - Coaches who are mentors, not adversaries |
| <i>Child’s frustration or burnout</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nagging kid to practice more – causes rebellion reddit.com - Forcing child to continue despite misery – child loses love for the | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child who is happy and motivated, looks forward to playing durbanmom.com - A balanced schedule with multi-sport or |
| <i>Toxic team culture or parent drama</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confronting other parents – often leads to arguments - Ignoring issues – doesn’t protect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive team culture where teammates support each other (e.g. celebrating every goal) durbanmom.com |
| <i>High costs of youth lacrosse</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investing in elite travel too early – can lead to bench time and disappointment - Spending on private coaching | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Worthwhile experiences for the money (skill growth, memories, maybe college looks) - Possibly some ROI via scholarships, but |

Players

Young players themselves, including middle school and high school athletes, also speak up online (often via Reddit or social media) about their experiences. Their perspectives reveal **frustrations on the field, experiments in handling challenges, and what they personally dream of in their lacrosse journey**. Notably, while players care about winning, many of their core desires are about *having fun, getting better*, and feeling supported – similar to what their parents and coaches want for them.

Pain Points/Challenges

- **Pressure and Expectations (Especially from Parents):** A lot of youth and teen players feel intense pressure to perform. Some feel they are disappointing their parents if they don't excel. One player shared, *"My dad loves me very much but recently I feel like he is upset with some recent performances I had, even though I had a good game."* [reddit.com](#) This quote encapsulates a common emotional strain – the feeling that nothing is ever good enough. Young athletes worry about living up to expectations, and it can suck the joy out of playing. The **fear of letting parents (or coaches) down** is a heavy burden for a kid. It can manifest as anxiety during games, or dread of post-game conversations. This challenge is often internalized; the player still loves the sport, but they hate the feeling of being a "disappointment."
- **Unenjoyable Practices / Boring Training Routines:** When players speak freely, many complain about practices that are tedious, overly hard, or poorly run. For example, a high school JV player vented that *"practice consists of running laps around the field... a lot of running... [I'm] usually gassed at the end and always dread going to practice."* [reddit.com](#) For this player, and many who chimed in, practice had become a slog rather than a fun, skill-building time. **Lack of engaging drills** or an imbalance in conditioning vs. play can make kids hate practice. Young players often crave more scrimmage time, stick work, or competitive mini-games, and less monotonous conditioning. When that balance is off, their motivation drops. Dreading practice is a serious issue because practice is where they spend most of their time – if it's miserable, it can make them question why they play at all.
- **Team Dynamics and Not Getting the Ball:** Being on a team where you feel underutilized or frozen out by teammates is another big frustration. As mentioned in the parent section, some players feel they never get passed to, or that certain cliques on the team dominate play. A multi-sport kid told his parent he was upset that *"no one on his town lacrosse and basketball teams pass the ball"* and it made him want to quit [reddit.com](#). For the player, **being ignored by teammates** is demoralizing – everyone wants a chance to contribute. Similarly, players hate "ball hogs" or when they are always the one left on the bench during crucial moments. Feeling like *"the odd one out"* on a team can turn what should be a fun outlet into a source of stress. This challenge often peaks in the middle school years when skills between players can vary widely, and stronger kids might not trust the weaker ones with the ball (leading to a self-fulfilling cycle where the weaker kids never improve because they never get the ball in game situations).

- **Competitive Stress and “Am I Good Enough?”:** As players approach high school, many start worrying about how they stack up against peers, especially if they have goals to play in varsity or college. They might see teammates committing to college programs or making elite clubs and wonder about their own prospects. Some express frustration that despite working hard, they aren’t getting the results or recognition. There’s also the stress of big games, tryouts, and showcases – some kids feel they **choke under pressure** or don’t have the mental resilience yet. While less discussed openly (teen pride can prevent them from admitting fear), it underlies many threads where players ask for advice on improving specific skills or fitness. In essence, a challenge for players is the **internal pressure** of competition: wanting to be great and the fear that they won’t be.

Trend Analysis: Young players’ posts often revolve around feelings – feeling **frustrated, left out, or under pressure**. They might not always say it directly, but reading between the lines you see a desire for more enjoyment and validation. Unlike coaches and parents, players rarely talk about “life lessons” in the moment; they talk about what’s fun or not fun, and whether they feel valued. The repeated appearance of words like “dread,” “upset,” “hate,” or “quit” in their posts shows that when the environment is negative, it hits them hard. However, when they talk about positive experiences, you see words like “love,” “great,” and “proud.” That dichotomy is key to understanding their pain points: a bad season or team can really make a young player miserable, while a good one can make them love the sport deeply.

What They’ve Tried That Didn’t Work

- **Avoidance (Skipping Practices or Quitting Mid-Season):** Some players admit that they coped with a bad lacrosse situation by skipping practice or mentally checking out – which usually only made things worse. For instance, in a thread asking if others ever felt like not going to practice, a player’s description of exhaustion led to advice that simply not showing up isn’t a solution [reddit.com](#) [reddit.com](#). Those who *have* tried skipping found themselves out of shape or further behind, compounding the original problem. Similarly, a few discuss quitting a team in frustration (or seriously considering it), only to later regret not seeing it through or missing out on friendships the rest of the season could have brought. Essentially, **running from the problem** – while an understandable impulse for a teenager – often leaves them feeling worse. It doesn’t address the root issues like improving fitness or communicating with coaches/teammates.
- **Suffering in Silence:** Many players tough out an issue without seeking help, which they later recognize didn’t help. For example, enduring a coach’s tough regimen without ever asking “Why are we doing so much running?” left one player simply resentful and tired, until he finally spoke up online and realized the coach might have a plan (conditioning for stamina) [reddit.com](#) [reddit.com](#). Likewise, players who feel a coach or teammates are treating them unfairly sometimes just swallow their feelings. This stoic approach can build character, but often the player’s performance suffers since they’re carrying emotional baggage. A recurring piece of advice players give each other is to *talk to the coach* – those who tried it (instead of staying silent) often got useful feedback. So the ones who *didn’t* try that, and stayed silent, often remained stuck. Thus, keeping quiet about problems is a non-solution many default to, with poor results for their enjoyment.

- **Copying Negative Behaviors:** Occasionally, a frustrated player will mimic bad behavior thinking it will help – for instance, ball-hogging themselves since others do it, or snapping back at a yelling parent/coach. These moves usually just escalate conflict or get the player a reputation as having a bad attitude. One user shared how a teammate started taking selfish shots out of frustration and ended up alienating the team further (we glean this from common scenarios – specific quotes are hard to find as players rarely boast about this strategy). The online consensus among players is that fighting selfishness with selfishness or anger with anger doesn't work; it tends to justify the coach's or team's negative view rather than change it.

Trend Analysis: Players often learn the hard way that **avoidance and passive resentment don't improve their situation**. Many of the “what didn't work” scenarios for players revolve around *not taking proactive action*. The ones who share their experiences usually come to realize they needed to communicate or adjust their own mindset. It's interesting that young players, after trying less constructive responses like skipping or complaining to peers, often come online seeking better solutions – which is a positive step in itself. In summary, the trial-and-error approaches in this group show that doing nothing or quitting at the first hurdle is rarely satisfying. The failures push them (or their peers) to suggest more active solutions, like talking to coaches or working on their game, which we'll see pay off in the next section.

Dream Outcomes

- **Having Fun and Loving the Sport:** When players imagine the best-case scenario, it's pretty simple: **they want to have fun** playing lacrosse. This comes up repeatedly in threads where kids reminisce or describe good teams they've been on. Fun can mean the practices are enjoyable, full of energy and variety, and the games are exciting. One player, after going through a tough conditioning phase, finally recognized the payoff and said he *loves running now* because he's no longer gassed in games [reddit.com reddit.com](#) – in other words, he found joy once he got over the hump. Players dream of that feeling when hard work starts being fun because you see results. They also often mention how much more they enjoy lacrosse when they're with friends. In fact, many youth players simply hope each season that they end up on a team with their buddies or at least make new friends they click with. Enjoying the camaraderie (the jokes in the locker room, the bus ride chants, the shared celebrations) is a huge part of loving the sport for them.
- **Strong Team Camaraderie and Respect:** A “dream team” for a player isn't just one that wins – it's one where teammates trust and like each other. Young players talk about wanting that tight-knit bond. In one discussion about team culture, even a parent noted how her daughter's eyes lit up seeing a team where players were “*genuinely happy for each other*” and always giving congratulations like a quick stick tap after a goal [durbanmom.com](#). That is exactly what players themselves crave: a team where if someone scores or makes a big play, **everyone cheers**, and if someone messes up, nobody bites their head off. Players dream of being on a squad where they feel they belong – where maybe the seniors take the freshmen under their wing, or the whole team has traditions that make everyone feel included. This sense of brotherhood or sisterhood is often what players remember most. One Reddit user posted a nostalgic note about two

boys who were “great friends and teammates in youth lacrosse” and remained close even when playing for rival high schools [reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com) – highlighting how those bonds endure. So, the ideal for players is a team that feels like a second family.

- **Personal Achievement and Improvement:** Young athletes are also inherently competitive and have personal goals. A dream outcome for many is seeing their own skills and role progress. For a newer player, it might be as simple as *finally catching a tough pass on the run* or scoring their first goal. For a more advanced player, it could be making varsity as a sophomore or getting that college offer. They dream of the day all the practice pays off. We saw earlier how a coach mentioned kids who sought feedback “*achieved the goal they set out for... and loved the game even more.*” [reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com) That resonates with what players express: accomplishing a goal (big or small) boosts their confidence and passion. Whether it’s improving their shot speed, mastering a dodge move, or becoming a starter, players fantasize about **hitting milestones** and proving to themselves and others what they’re capable of. Importantly, they want to do this in a way that feels earned. The pride in “I worked for this” is a huge part of the dream. We often see teens posting things like, “I finally did X after months of practice” – those posts radiate happiness. In essence, players want to feel **successful and skilled**, each at their own level.
- **Recognition and Advancement:** Hand-in-hand with personal achievement is the desire for recognition – not necessarily awards, but at least a pat on the back from coaches or peers. A dream scenario for a kid might be hearing their coach shout their name in praise during a game, or being voted a team captain. External validation means a lot at that age. Some also dream of tangible advancement: making the A team, getting MVP of a tournament, or being recruited. While not all players aspire to college lacrosse, those who do imagine the thrill of getting that email or phone call from a college coach. Even globally, a kid in a non-traditional lacrosse country might dream of being the one to put their nation on the map or just making their national junior team. It’s that **recognition of talent and hard work** that is a sweet dream for any competitor. Still, even in these dreams, the underlying theme is positive reinforcement – essentially being told “you’re good at this and your contribution matters.” That is incredibly affirming for a young athlete.

Trend Analysis: The dreams of players revolve around **enjoyment, belonging, and accomplishment**. It’s striking that their ideal vision isn’t far from what the adults want for them: fun, friends, and growth. When players fantasize about the “perfect season,” it usually involves a team that gets along, a coach that believes in them, and personal moments of triumph. They want to be challenged but supported, and to end the season as a better player than they started. These aspirations are often voiced in upbeat threads sharing best memories or hopes for an upcoming year. Repeatedly, we see that **intrinsic rewards** (love of the game, friendships) and **earned success** mean the most to them. The language they use – “love,” “best,” “proud,” “excited” – in those positive discussions paints a clear picture of what they value. For marketing or program development (like POWLAX’s interest), tapping into these authentic hopes – improving skills, having fun with friends, feeling like a star even for a moment – is key to connecting with the youth player audience.

Summary Table – Players:

| Players' | Ineffective Responses | Their Dreams |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Feeling pressure to perform</i> | - Skipping practice or giving up – leads to falling behind and guilt reddit.com - Keeping feelings inside – stress | - Enjoying the game without constant anxiety reddit.com - Support from parents/coaches even in losses (knowing it's okay to make mistakes) |
| <i>Not having fun at practice</i> | - Half-hearted effort (just going through motions) – practice stays boring - Complaining to peers only – | - Fun, active practices that mix skill work and play - Coaches who make drills exciting and show how work pays off (so they don't "dread") |
| <i>Team or coach doesn't trust them</i> | - Ball-hogging back or showing attitude – worsens team trust - Quitting team mid-season – miss chance to improve dynamic | - Inclusive team play (everyone gets the ball, everyone has a role) reddit.com - Teammates who are friends on and off the field, positive team chemistry |
| <i>Wanting to improve/be recognized</i> | - Trying to coast on talent or do bare minimum – stagnates progress - Comparing themselves | - Getting better each season (measurable improvements like more goals, better fitness) - Reaching personal milestones (making varsity, getting an award) and feeling proud |

Conclusion

Across coaches, parents, and players in youth lacrosse, the online discourse in 2024–2025 highlights a shared desire for a **positive, growth-focused sports experience**. Each group expresses it in their own way: coaches talk about fun and fundamentals, parents talk about happiness and fairness, and players talk about having fun and feeling valued. The pain points — from unmotivated kids and over-involved parents to burnout and team conflicts — are challenges that a organization like POWLAX can directly address through empathetic messaging and supportive programs. The failed approaches (bribes, nagging, avoidance, etc.) provide insight into what **not** to do, steering us toward strategies that truly resonate, such as communication, community-building, and balancing competition with enjoyment.

By using the authentic language from these stakeholders (“cut throat,” “crapping on my kid,” “dread going to practice,” “stick click after a great play,” etc.), POWLAX can show that it **understands the reality** of youth lacrosse. This rapport-building is crucial; as the research shows, solutions only work when they connect with the actual feelings and motivations of those involved.

In summary, the trends indicate that successful youth lacrosse programs (and their marketing) should:

- **For Coaches:** Emphasize resources and training that help them keep kids engaged (making practice fun, building skills progressively) and help manage parent relations — all while reaffirming the core mission of helping kids love the game [reddit.com](#). Coaches

respond to messaging that acknowledges their challenges (herding distracted kids and calming parent tensions) and offers proven techniques beyond the old-school drills that “lose” the kids [reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com).

- **For Parents:** Speak to their concerns about fairness, development, and enjoyment. Parents appreciate knowing that a program values *every* kid and fosters a supportive team culture where their child can thrive. They also respond well to guidance on how to support rather than pressure — for instance, showing that **parent involvement is welcome in positive forms** (volunteering, playing catch at home) but that the program philosophy is about fun and growth over wins. Let them know their investment is going into an experience that will make their child smile, build friendships, and learn life lessons [reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com).
- **For Players:** Appeal directly to what they love: **having fun, getting better, and feeling part of a team**. Marketing to players can highlight things like creative drills, chance to make new friends, and testimonials from other kids about how they “fell in love with lacrosse” in the program. Showing that POWLAX understands issues like practice burnout or team politics — and actively works to prevent those — can earn trust from savvy teens. Ultimately, players want to hear that joining this organization means *more fun, more touches on the ball, and a team where everyone has each other’s back*. That’s their dream scenario, as echoed in numerous posts, and delivering on it will turn them into the program’s biggest advocates.

By aligning its messaging with these authentic insights and even quoting snippets of the very language used by the community, POWLAX can create an immediate connection. Whether it’s a coach reading about a solution to “kids not listening,” a parent nodding along to “*no one ever died because they didn’t do enough backyard lacrosse*” [reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com), or a player seeing that a program promises they won’t “dread practice” but actually look forward to it, this research-based approach will resonate. It shows that POWLAX is not just selling lacrosse training, but is genuinely tuned in to the **real experiences and hopes** of the youth lacrosse family.