



# 3 Tips From the Parents of Christian Pulisic

Sports parents with bad form are on the rise. You don't have to be watching TV, reading the newspaper, or on the field for very long to get a glimpse of the dark side of youth sports. "Parental intensity" has gotten a bit crazy. But that's not the case for ALL parents. In fact, if you're watching this video, you're part of a select group of parents who are taking steps to keep healthy-role-modeling in the game.

Christian Pulisic is an American Soccer Superstar. He's playing professionally in Europe at 19 years of age. His parents fall into this category too. In fact, it's easy to see that they have

done many things very well. Let's look at three specific behaviors that are good for every parent to remember.

**Take a Supportive, Hands-Off Approach:** More is not necessarily better. This is something many parents forget when they see signs of talent in their young athletes. They figure if going to practice three days a week is good, then six days a week must be twice as good. But the Pulisics took a more relaxed approach toward Christian's soccer. In fact, Mr. Pulisic said that if they did anything differently it was that they didn't put Christian in structured environments ALL the time. Instead of putting him on all kinds of travel teams and summer leagues they had him play for 1 team. He practiced twice a week and had one game on the weekends. Of course Christian was allowed to practice on his own in the backyard as much as he wanted. By the time he turned 12, scouts started noticing his abilities. But his parents were very aware of always working to keep balance in his life.

**Allow Ownership of Ambition Levels:** Although he is often referred to as the Wonder Boy of professional soccer, anyone who knows Christian has seen that he has worked very hard to get there. Early on his parents noticed that he had his own internal drive to do everything well. In an interview with 60 Minutes, his Mom said, "Everything he does has to be at a very high level, he doesn't like mediocrity. He wants it to be perfect." Notice, she didn't say, "WE want him to be perfect."

Christian's parents didn't impose on him a work ethic. They allowed his personality and appetite to direct him from the inside out. Perhaps your child is NOT so perfectionistic. The point here is to allow your children to be themselves, instead of fighting against their nature.

**Focus on Building Confidence:** Christian often played with older kids because his skills were well beyond his own peers. His father, Mark, encouraged him, saying, "there is one thing you must never lose... you always have to play with the confidence that you belong." Mark even went so far as to paint the word "confidence" on top of the door frame so that every time Christian passed under it he would be reminded to believe in himself. It's this certainty that gave Christian the courage to move to Germany at age 16, play on a team, and attend a school where he didn't even know the language. And confidence in himself helped him learn and embrace that language in 1 year.

Christian Pulisic has a very bright future ahead of him and there's no doubt he is who he is in large part thanks to his parents. They surely have raised a hard-working, confident, and character-based athlete.

As the world is watching, this young but determined athlete has this to say... "I don't want to be perceived as the future, or a wonder boy, I want to be seen in the present, and to be known as a leader." Mature words from a 19-year-old soccer player.





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## Discussion Guide for Parent and Athlete

1

Which of the 3 tips will be most helpful to your athlete right now? What does she need?

2

Discuss with your child the steps he would like to see you take now to improve the sport experience.