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Commandments for Parenting Elite Youth Athletes



This is a guide on how to parent athletes so that they can progress from good to great. Over the last decade of coaching experience, we've witnessed many great things happen, like one of our athletes becoming a bronze medal-Olympian and World Medalist.

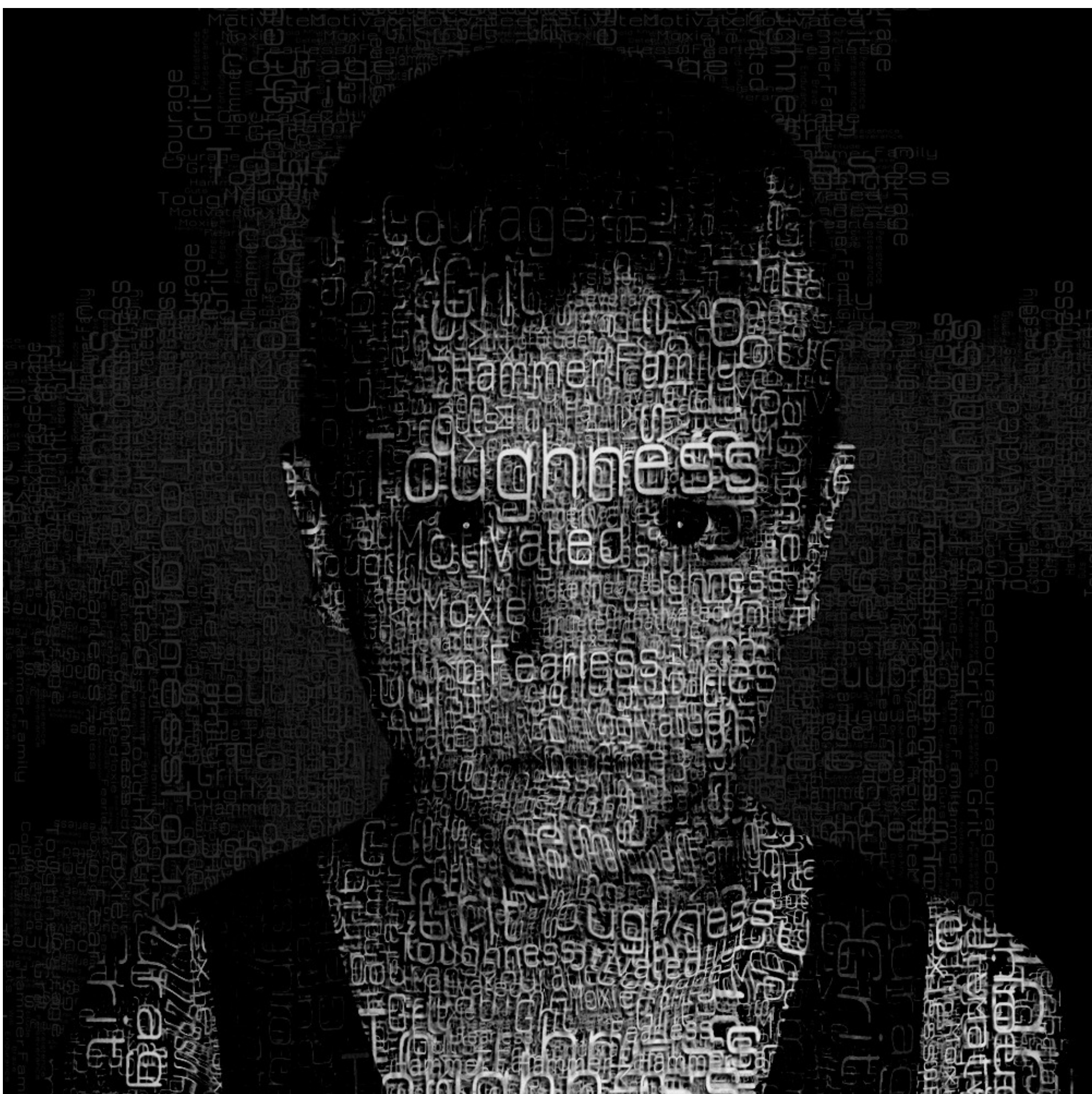
But throughout that time, we've also seen a disproportionate amount of negative things happen to athletes. We've seen many with amazing potential not return to their favorite sports because of overly aggressive parenting and fear culture coaching.

The following book contains basic principles to make sure that athletes continue to progress to the elite level.



Commandment I.

If there is one thing that we want you take away from this guide it is this philosophy: everything must be kept in perspective, and that perspective should be that you want your child to perform well at the high school and college level. **Nothing at the youth level matters in the long run except that they fall in love with hard work and learn to get excited for difficult challenges.**



Commandment II.

Keep building kids up. Don't always tear them down, even when they mess up. You don't want to create an atmosphere of fear. The kids will shut down and will oftentimes perform worse because they're so worried about messing up...that they mess up. There doesn't have to be parades or false praise, but find something to compliment them on along with something that should be improved. If you had a job where you could never seem to be doing anything right and just got yelled at every day by someone that never appreciated your hard work would you keep going or want to find a new job?



Commandment III.

Don't put your (or your kid's) focus on winning. Make improvement the goal. If they performed better than the previous day, or fixed a mistake that they kept making, then that's a win. Making a champion in anything is a long-term commitment. Many major elite athletes adhere to the 1% philosophy. If they can get 1% better with each practice, then that practice was a success. And if there are 3 practices a week, plus a tournament every week for 3 months then the kid will be 48% better than when they started. And if they do an extra practice, they'll be 12% better than the kids that do the minimum.



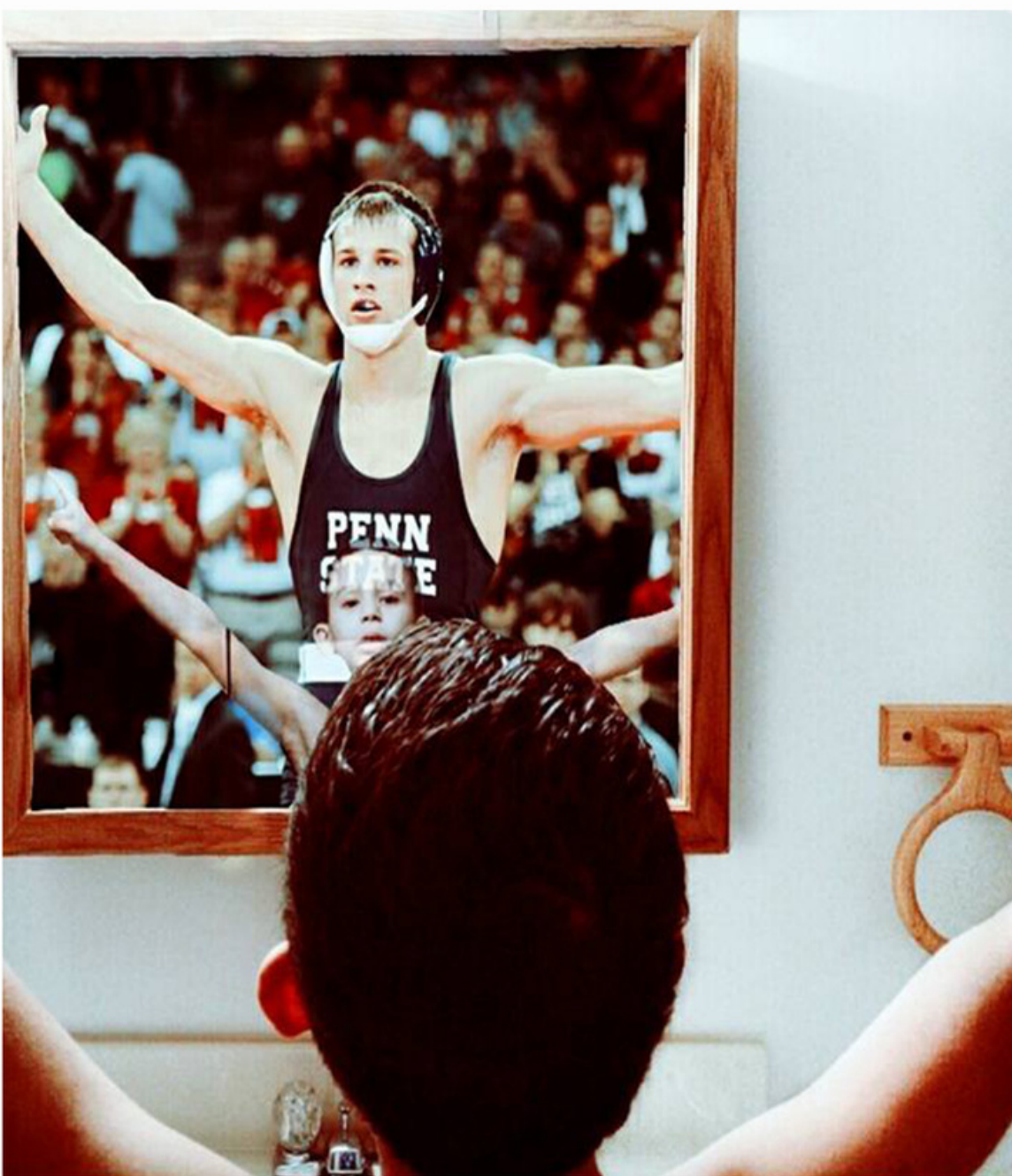
Commandment IV.

To elaborate even further on the “not winning” and “fear culture” philosophy, if a kid is scared about what will happen if they lose, they’ll never go after the tough competition and will always choose the easier opponent because of their fear of punishment. This slows down their progress immensely in the long run. A close and tough loss to a great opponent is a much better success than winning against an opponent that is easy. You don’t learn anything from easy wins. You learn from the tough battles. And of those, I actually prefer a loss, because it makes them hungrier to improve



Commandment V.

Have the kids set goals. And have them write their goals down in a notebook or something similar that they can do every day. It only takes 2-3 minutes, but it helps them remember every day where they're at, and where they want to be. This is a form of visualization, which is a huge component in high level athletics.



What You Imagine, You Create

Commandment VI.

Let the kids know that making mistakes is okay. But repeating mistakes is not okay. But, on the opposite side of this, kids can really only recognize and fix 1-2 things per practice. So if you give them a list of 20 mistakes that you want fixed overnight, you're just going to overwhelm them. Patience and getting kids to practice consistently is what's going to fix all those problems in the long run.



Commandment VII.

Make sure your kids are making friends on their team. The social aspect of youth sports is HUGE! Everyone has a bad practice or game every now and then. Their friends are who pick up the slack and get them through it. Their friends are why they want to come to practice. Improving alongside their friends is what makes sports fun. And **having fun improving is what's going to keep them interested in sports for the long haul.**



Commandment VIII.

Make sure your kids are making friends on other teams. Teaching them how not to be arrogant or mean to others after a win or loss is a must-have skill. They should try and be a positive influence wherever they're at. **They're always a representation of their team,** and our teams always have high standards in terms of leadership and community presence.



Commandment IX.

As a parent, don't start, or contribute in any fashion, to DRAMA!!!!!! No rumors. No backtalking.

No undermining coaches. No complaining, especially to your kids. Sports are hard enough as it is without parents bringing their own issues into the mix. Whoever the coach is, you made a decision to entrust them with your kid's progress. Stick by that decision. If you're not happy, transfer after the season. All you're doing with starting drama or talking bad about coaches to your own kid is teaching them it's okay to not have to listen to anybody. They'll never learn true responsibility this way. They'll never learn to love hard work this way. They'll only learn to look for excuses to not have to put in the hard work.



Commandment X.

Do NOT out-scream your wrestler's coach. We get it. You're excited. We're excited. Matches are intense. Especially the close ones with a tight score. Parents want to yell and encourage their wrestler, or motivate them when they're down. But screaming over a coach takes the wrestler's attention off of the current strategy that the coach has worked on with the wrestler. Now they have two...or more likely three people screaming different things at them. This is why they have that confused look on their face. This is why they make mistakes during big matches. They don't know what to focus on. But don't worry...we're in the same boat. In fact, coaches that are also parents are oftentimes the worst (yes, this includes our own team, we're still working on it every tournament. It's hard.)



Commandment XI.

Encourage kids to have a hero in their sport and become a student of the game. What kid doesn't like to pretend they're a superhero? Same thing with sports. Who doesn't want to be Tom Brady and throw the game-winning Super Bowl pass? Or Bo Nickal when the championship is on the line? Help them find someone that plays in their position at the college or professional level and have them use one of their signature moves or play style. Kids are imaginative. Help them use that towards their improvement.



You are the sum of all of your opponents

Finale

We hope this guide helps you and your wrestler and your club. It is by no means set in stone or the only way to do things. It is simply several years of research and what has been the most effective way for us to teach our wrestlers to love hard work and improvement - which will keep the wrestlers in the sport longer and give them time to progress from average to good to great.

If you have other tips that we can learn from please send them to:

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