



6 Things to Remember When an Athlete Switches Gyms

by Anne Josephson, JAG Gym, Culver City, CA

With the end of the competitive season comes some real plusses: weekends free of travel, a chance to welcome new kids into the beginning ranks of team and the fun that comes with workouts free of the stress of full routines.

And then there is the real downside: when a competitive athlete chooses to leave our gym for another.

The truth is one of the harder things I have dealt with and watched coaches deal with is the departure of an athlete from our club to another club. And it's a mourning that is seldom fully understood by our family members and friends who aren't coaches or club owners.

Sure, sometimes it comes with relief of knowing that a family that caused distress to the coaching staff has moved on to be someone else's problem. But sometimes it is an event that is made sad because the staff genuinely loved and cared about the child and family.

Stick around the sport long enough, and you will have your heart broken at some point. For as much as owning or coaching at a gym is a business, it is a business that comes with deep connection to the kids and families we whom we work.

So here are six things to remember when an athlete you adore switches gyms:

Remember that most decisions have less to do with you than you think. Decisions are complicated. Often people making them are not even fully aware of the reasons they are making the choices they are making. But this I can tell you: you likely have far less to do with the decision than you think. People don't think of us as often as we believe them to. They are thinking about themselves and their needs.

Remember that making a different choice does not necessarily indicate a problem with your coaching/program. If you are conscientious person, you are likely to labor over what you could have done to make the client happier. You might think you need to change your program to be more like the program your athlete left to go to. Maybe. But probably not. Just because someone doesn't choose you, does not necessarily mean there is anything wrong with what you are doing.

If after reflecting you realize that there are things you do need to change, then go right ahead and make those changes. A professional coach or club owner is always learning, adapting and growing.

Remember that you cannot be for everyone. If you appeal to everyone, you appeal to no one. Great programs have strong philosophies. Strong philosophies mean there are going to be people who don't like what you are selling.

Remember that things change, and even if it was once a fit, it may no longer be. Maybe your program was a great fit for recreational classes, but the team philosophy doesn't match what the parent wants for their child. Or maybe the coach who was so terrific with the athlete as a pre-teen is not the right fit for the athlete as a teen. It happens.

Remember that there are other families who are happy with your program. It's easy to focus on the small percentage of people that are not happy. To wring your hands over the ones who complain. But remember there are people who are thrilled with your training, whose kids are happy and thriving.

Remember that the more you can smile because it happened, the happier you will be. Of course you will feel a loss when a kid you adored goes to another gym. But try to focus on the time you had teaching that athlete and let the rest go. Allow yourself a little time to mourn the loss of interacting with that athlete on a regular basis and then get back to work because undoubtedly you have a whole bunch of other kids that want to learn from you!