

# For parents, the name of their game is "sacrifice"

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(Center, from left) Azza Abdelziz and Jocelyn Picache watch their sons' high school home basketball game in Fort Lee, New Jersey. Photo: Amy Newman/The Record/TNS

HACKENSACK, N.J. — When Mohammad Abdelhamid was 3 years old, he told his mother that he was going to be a basketball player and buy a mansion.

His mother, Azza Abdelziz, took his ambitions seriously and raised him to be an athlete. Now a high school student, he plays three sports at Fort Lee High School – soccer, basketball and baseball. Mohammad also plays for a private soccer club that travels around the region.

Abdelziz cheered for her son on a recent Sunday as she watched him take on another high school team in a basketball tournament. Also in the stands were relatives, friends and college recruiters taking in the action as the warm bodies on the court pushed up the temperature in the gym.

But Abdelziz deserved as much praise from her son as she heaped on him.

## **Huge Sacrifices for Sports**

She and other parents in the crowd have made tremendous sacrifices to help their children pursue their dreams of an athletic career. Abdelziz said that over the past 10 years, she has hosted relatives at her house less and less because of her son's game and practice schedule. She also stuck with her job as a school bus driver rather than find another one, because the hours are better for high school sports.

Jocelyn Picache, the mother of another Fort Lee player, said basketball is not even the most demanding of youth sports. She estimated her family spent upward of \$100,000 transporting her eldest daughter around the country for gymnastics competitions from the time the girl was 6 until she was 13. Her daughter, who was a prospect for the U.S. Olympic team, had to give up the sport after a serious back injury.

"We could have made a down payment on a house" with the money, Picache said.

## **For Parents, It's All Worth It**

In talking about their sacrifices, though, parents were full of pride, not bitterness.

Howard Breindel, the father of a player for Tenafly High School, said making sacrifices for your children is what parenting is all about.

"You have kids so you can support them through these years," he said, "because after that they're gone."

Plus, he said, by participating in sports, young athletes learn essential life lessons such as discipline, teamwork, respect, sportsmanship and focus. Over and over, parents watching the tournament said sports will help their boys succeed in the classroom and in life.

Then there is the lure of playing ball in college. Kevin Goodson, whose son plays for Jersey City's Henry Snyder High School, said that playing basketball in college was a dream for everyone on his son's team.

Breindel speculated that by the time kids get to high school and see all the talented athletes out there, they become more realistic about their chances of playing at the next level. That is fine with Breindel, he said, because there is so much else to do. Breindel's son, for example, has been accepted into college to write movie screenplays.

## **Tough Odds, But Still Enjoyable**

According to 2013 estimates from the NCAA, a mere 3.3 percent of high school men's basketball players compete at the college level. For soccer, that percentage is 5.7 percent of high school players, 6.5 percent for football, 6.8 percent for baseball and 3.7 percent for women's basketball.

Only 0.03 percent of high school men's basketball players make it as a pro.

While high school sports last, Abdelziz and Picache are going to enjoy it to the fullest. The two women live on different floors in the same apartment building, but they see each other most often at their sons' sporting events.

"All these kids are like my kids," Abdelziz said as she cheered alongside Picache. She said she especially enjoyed road trips for away games when all the players and family members go out to dinner together and stay at the same hotel.

For Picache, attending her son's games helps her relax after a long day of work.

"Once I go to the game, it takes the pressure off," she said. "I forget about everything."

## Quiz

- 1 Select the paragraph from the section "For Parents, It's All Worth It" that BEST explains why parents should not worry if their children do not become athletes.
  
- 2 Which sentence from the section "Huge Sacrifices For Sports" shows that "huge sacrifices" might not always pay off?
  - (A) Abdelziz said that over the past 10 years, she has hosted relatives at her house less and less because of her son's game and practice schedule.
  - (B) Her daughter, who was a prospect for the U.S. Olympic team, had to give up the sport after a serious back injury.
  - (C) She estimated her family spent upward of \$100,000 transporting her eldest daughter around the country for gymnastics competitions from the time the girl was 6 until she was 13.
  - (D) Jocelyn Picache, the mother of another Fort Lee player, said basketball is not even the most demanding of youth sports.
  
- 3 Read the sentence from the article.

*But Abdelziz deserved as much praise from her son as she heaped on him.*

Which answer option BEST describes the role this sentence plays in developing and refining a key concept in the article?

- (A) Suggesting that a parent's athleticism is as important as the child's.
- (B) Suggesting that a parent's dedication is as important as the child's.
- (C) Explaining why parents put so much money into helping their children become athletes.
- (D) Explaining why parents put so much time into helping their children become athletes.

- 4 Read the sentence from the section "Tough Odds, But Still Enjoyable."

*For soccer, that percentage is 5.7 percent of high school players, 6.5 percent for football, 6.8 percent for baseball and 3.7 percent for women's basketball.*

Which answer option BEST describes the role this sentence plays in developing and refining a key concept in the article?

- (A) It explains that the "tough odds" for becoming a college athlete are not so tough.
- (B) It shows the "tough odds" for becoming a college athlete.
- (C) It explains that the "tough odds" for becoming a professional athlete make it almost impossible.
- (D) It shows that not all sports have "tough odds" for becoming a college athlete.