

Beyond the Final Whistle

Five conversations for the journey home



A MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHILD'S COACH

I've shared this guide because I believe sport can give your child something far more valuable than fitness, trophies or a place in the league table.

Think of a team you belonged to years ago. You might not remember the scores, or where you finished. But you probably remember the friendships, the laughs, the things you got through together and the feeling of being part of something bigger than yourself. That feeling shapes people. It's what I'm trying to build with this team.

Alongside the skills and the tactics, I'm working on something less visible: a team where every player belongs and knows what this team is about. There's a simple structure behind it, called TRIBE, and this guide lets you build the same thing at home. It takes a few questions on the journey home. Nothing more.

What is TRIBE?

TRIBE is a way of building the thing that turns a group of children who happen to wear the same shirt into a team that means something to them. It stands for five things every strong team shares:

- **Traditions**
the stories, habits and history that connect the team's past, present and future.
- **Relevance**
the team meaning something real to each player.
- **Identity**
what makes this team different from any other.
- **Belonging**
every player feeling they are part of it.
- **Effectiveness**
the team growing and getting better together.

When these five things are strong, something changes. Players stop thinking of the team as somewhere they turn up to play, and start to see the team as part of who they are. They think less about me and more about us.

None of this is made up. Scientists who study teams have spent years – decades, really – working out what makes a team good for the people in it, from Sunday-morning clubs to international squads. They keep finding the same thing. When young people feel they truly

belong, they grow in confidence, look out for each other, and get far more out of the whole experience. It even shows in the results: one study found that the teams with the strongest sense of togetherness outperformed the weakest by 53%. Winning is never the reason to build a team like this. But it is often one of the things that follows.

How to use this guide

Your child's coach is building these five things with the team, one at a time. Each week, or each block of weeks, they'll be focusing on one part of TRIBE, and they'll let you know which one.

This week the team is working on:

- ☐ Traditions
- ☐ Relevance
- ☐ Identity
- ☐ Belonging
- ☐ Effectiveness

All you need to do is turn to the matching conversation. When the team is working on Belonging in training, and you're asking about it in the car, your child hears the same idea from two directions. That's when it starts to stick.

There are two easy ways to do this. You can slip one question into the chat on the way home. Or you can hand your child this guide, or your phone, and pick one to talk about together. Either works. Sitting side by side in the car, with nobody having to make eye contact, is often when children say the most.

Pick one question, not all three. A list fired across the gearstick feels like an interview, and you'll get a shrug. One good question, asked most weeks, does far more than three asked once.

You don't need to become another coach. You don't need to analyse tactics. Your job is simpler and, honestly, more important. Just be curious.

There are no right or wrong answers. Some weeks your child will have plenty to say. Other weeks they'll shrug and stare out of the window. That's completely normal. The aim isn't the perfect answer. It's helping your child notice they're becoming part of something that matters.

CONVERSATION ONE

Traditions

Every strong team has a thread running through it. The way they warm up. An in-joke. A story about a game everyone still talks about. The players who came before. Traditions connect who the team was, who it is, and who it's becoming, and children who feel part of that thread feel part of something bigger than one season.

Before you begin

Think of a group you belonged to that had its own habits and stories. What did those shared things give you?

ASK YOUR CHILD

- What does your team always do on match days that makes it feel like your team? A team song, a sign, something that always happens.
- What do you think this team is going to be remembered for?
- If someone joined the team this week, what's the one thing you'd most want them to know about it?

CONVERSATION TWO

Relevance

A team matters more to a child when they understand why it matters. Not the league position. The reason it's worth their Saturday morning. Children who know why their team matters tend to stay committed when things get hard.

Before you begin

Think back to a team or group that meant a lot to you. What made it worth showing up for? Perhaps you never had that. If so, what do you wish sport had given you?

ASK YOUR CHILD

- You put a lot into this team. What makes it worth it?
- When do you feel proudest to pull on the shirt?
- What would you miss if this team wasn't there?

CONVERSATION THREE

Identity

Every memorable team has a personality. People recognise them for something beyond their results: how they play, how they carry themselves, what they stand for. As players work out who they are together, the team stops being a collection of individuals and becomes a single “us”.

Before you begin

Think of the best team you've ever watched. What made them instantly recognisable?

ASK YOUR CHILD

- What's your team trying to be known for this season? And did you see any of that today?
- When at its best, what do you think makes your team different to the other teams?
- What do you hope people say about your team?

CONVERSATION FOUR

Belonging

The strongest teams are the ones players never want to leave. That comes from belonging: the sense that you're wanted here, that someone would notice if you didn't turn up. Belonging is built in small moments. A welcome. A word of encouragement. A hand up off the floor.

Before you begin

Think of a time someone made you feel welcome. You probably still remember how it felt. Small kindnesses become long memories.

ASK YOUR CHILD

- Who encouraged you today?
- Who did you help today?
- Did you notice anyone being left out today?

CONVERSATION FIVE

Effectiveness

Strong teams get better together. Not just individual skills, but the shared sense that “we can handle this”, including when things go wrong. Sport is one of the safest places a child ever learns that a setback isn't the end of the story.

Before you begin

Think of something difficult you've come through in your own life. What kept you going?

ASK YOUR CHILD

- What did your team do well when things got hard today?
- What did you learn today that might help next week?
- What are you looking forward to getting better at?

A final thought

You won't remember every score. Neither will your child. What they'll remember is how it felt to be part of this team, and the person they became inside it.

You don't need to be a coach to help with that. You need to be curious on the journey home. A question or two, matched to whatever the team is building that week, is enough. Do that across a season and you're not just watching your child play. You're helping build the team they'll never want to leave.

TRIBE is grounded in years of research into what makes teams work, and is used by teams from grassroots clubs to international squads.

Find out more at tribeteams.com