
THE RESPONSIBLE SPORTS PARENT 3

TEACHING SPORTSMANSHIP

If you have been a youth sport parent for a number of years, the likelihood is that too many times the media are ready to blame out of control parents for the ills of youth sport. Screaming on the sideline, abusing the young athletes, yelling at the officials, and displaying poor sportsmanship.

One piece of advice that is handed out regularly to parents is to set a good example for your children, and most parents DO try to be positive and encourage their children as they climb the competitive ladder, but to have a positive influence on those around us, including children and other parents, we need to do more than just clap and cheer for our kids.

1. Cheer for all the children, even those on the other team

When parents make an effort to applaud a good effort or a fine play – no matter who makes it, the difference in the stands and on the pitch is surprising

2. Thank the officials

All too often the only words a volunteer official hear are harsh words of criticism such as “get some glasses ump” or “your ruining the game ump”, which inevitably won’t improve the concentration of the official and lead to further mistakes. Make sure that the official for your child’s game always hears at least one sports parent thanking them after the game – you. If you keep it up your example will surely spread to other parents of the team and the young athletes

3. Talk to parents of the other team – they are not the enemy

Sometimes we get so caught up in an in-town rivalry, or big match against another school, that we forget that that the other team is made up of a bunch of young athletes very similar to our own, and their parents care about them as much as you do about yours. Showing your children that you can interact with parents from other teams in a friendly manner sets them a good example to interact with their opposition in very much the same way, win or lose.

4. Be a parent, not a coach: resist the urge to critique

Its well documented that some athletes dread the journey home with their parents after a match, because win or lose they know their parent will go over their performance in detail pointing out all their mistakes. In most cases they don’t get angry and don’t shout but with the very best of intentions just want them to know how they could improve.

The problem with this is that of course the young athlete probably already knows every error that has been pointed out, and more, but for obvious reasons didn’t need them pointing out. Don’t take their quiet stoicism in the face of a poor performance for lack of caring.