

Ten Commandments of Parental Behavior

Thirty or forty years ago, watching a youth game was fairly simple. Parents would bring the kids, hang around the field, chitchat with other moms and dads. Then, when the game ended, the kids would hop back into their parents' cars and off they'd go for an ice cream cone.

These days, however, life at youth league games is no longer so pristine and pure. And its parents, no the kids, who are the main reason so many problems and concerns are cropping up. Moms and dads too often are losing perspective not only of what's important at these games, but also of what's appropriate sideline behavior. So, parents, here is a quick reminder of how grown-ups should behave at kids' games.

1. Talk about the other kids on the team- indeed, on both teams- in the same manner you would want other parents to talk about your child. This is the golden rule applied to sports. Watching kid' sports tend to be a social affair. When you're making a conversation on the sideline with your friends and neighbors, think about what you're saying before you actually say it.
2. It's nice to give the coach a pat on the back when he or she wins. It's even nicer when you give the coach a pat on the back after a loss. Remember that the vast majority of coaches are volunteers or being paid very minimally. They are sacrificing their own time to help your kid. So give them a well-deserved salute, especially when their team hasn't fared well that day.
3. Understand the purpose of educational athletics. School sports are about kids learning and having fun. They're not about attempting to earn college athletic scholarships.
4. Understand that you are possibly the biggest role model in your child's life. Carrying on wildly in the stands at games and challenging the authority of coaches and officials does little to model positive behavior in your child's presence.
5. Make your cheers during games those of support of your child – not instructions as to how to play.
6. Recognize that school coaches and administrators are now in charge of your child's athletic activities. Don't undermine their authority – openly or behind the scenes.
7. Remember that school athletics are learning experiences for students and that mistakes are sometimes made. Praise student-athletes in their attempt to improve themselves as students, athletes and as people as you would praise a student working in the classroom.
8. Remember that a ticket to a school athletic event is a privilege to observe the contest, not a license to verbally assault others and be generally obnoxious.
9. If you aren't a "good sport" at the games, the kids won't be either. This should be self-evident. If you set a pattern of being a sideline loudmouth who likes to yell and scream at the ref, coach, or opposing team, don't be surprised when your kids start copying your behavior. You will have only yourself to blame.
10. Don't live your life through your child's athletic activities. This is their time. This is their place. Let them play.