
THE RESPONSIBLE SPORTS PARENT 2

PARENTAL BEHAVIOUR AT A YOUTH SPORTS EVENT

All too many times we hear of an altercation between a parent and another adult whether that be a coach, another parent or an official at a youth sports match. On many occasions this has led sports organisers to wonder, “should we abolish sports programmes – or just abolish parents?”

Why do parents lose it at their child’s sporting events? It has been well documented that some experts feel that parents get too wrapped up in the competition because they are living vicariously through their children. Others believe that parents are filled with unrealistic expectations hoping their child will become the next David Beckham or Jane Sixsmith. Consequently they place too much emphasis on the importance of winning or looking good on the field. Added to this there is a parent’s natural protectiveness of their child.

Everyone wants to protect their children from getting hurt, and when things happen on the playing field that do hurt them either physically or psychologically parents tend to feel helpless and powerless. These feelings in too many instances cause a person to get angry. It is unrealistic to expect a parent to not feel anger so the key to the problem is teaching parents to manage that anger, enabling them to express their feelings in a way that helps reduce the anger and resolve the situation. “Letting it all out often tends to do the opposite”

So what should you do if you feel like you’re a volcano about to erupt?

1. Stay Calm – Don’t raise your voice – don’t resort to name calling or violence
2. Any action you take should be with full permission from your child and by appointment with the most appropriate person at an appropriate time
3. When talking about the issues use “I” statements such as “I’m trying to understand what happened” rather than “you did this” or “your child acted like a thug out there” this only creates antagonism rather than solutions

The point being that in sports (and in life) is that when it comes to children it should be about them, not about us.

Sports are for children to have fun, to learn new skills and make new friends. Sports are not a vehicle for making parents look good, fulfil unrealised parental dreams or prove who is a better sports parent.

Remember that without the many volunteer coaches and officials in this country your child would not have the opportunity to participate in structured sport

When youth sports become about adults, that’s when anything can happen – and usually does.