

Ten Commandments of Parental Behavior for Watching Your Child's Sports

(from SportsEngine, by Rick Wolff)

I. Talk about the other children, on both teams, in the same manner you would like other parents to talk about your child. This is the **GOLDEN RULE** applied to all sports. Watching kid's sports tends to be a social affair. When you're having a conversation on the sideline with your friends and neighbors, think about what you're saying before you actually say it. To always be on the safe side, only voice praise for all of the children. That way, you'll never go wrong.

II. It's nice to give the coach a pat on the back when he or she wins. It's even nicer to do it after a loss. Remember, the vast majority of coaches are volunteers who are sacrificing their own time to help **your** child. Give them a well-deserved salute, especially if the team hasn't fared too well.

III. Don't hesitate to give the referee/umpire a pat on the back either. As you may be aware, they are people too. They also like it when parents and fans acknowledge their on-field efforts. Why don't **you** lead the way?

IV. Remind your child that it's the effort that counts. We all know that kids want to win. That's a given. However, for every winning team, there's also a losing team. Be prepared to cushion your child's disappointment after a loss by pointing out that he or she played hard and put forth a tremendous effort.

V. **Avoid the post-game analysis.** When the game is over and your child climbs back into your car, avoid at all costs the detailed, excruciating post-game analysis of everything he or she did right and wrong. Let them "chill out", savor the fun of having played, and relax. The absolute worst time for "friendly criticism" is immediately after the game.

VI. *SMILE. A lot.* Kid's sports are about having fun, and because kids take their behavioral cues from you, try to at least look like you're enjoying yourself.

VII. If parents 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 to copy your behavior. You will only have yourself to blame.

VIII. Take the time to learn the rules of the game. Many kids these days are playing sports you may not be familiar with. If you don't know the rules, why don't you and your child learn them **together**. Besides, it's always a good idea to read the rule book. It just might help in settling a dispute. (Plus, nothing is more embarrassing than to complain about a call, only to be wrong in your complaint because you don't know the rules.)

IX. If you must make noise at games, shout only praise and encouragement. If you're a screamer and yeller, make sure that when you open your mouth, you're only pouring forth cheerful encouragement for your child's team. There is **never** a place for derogatory, snide, or sarcastic comments at kid's games. Plus, it is extremely embarrassing for your child to see you making a fool of yourself at the game in front of his or her teammates and friends.

X. **Above all**, be there for your children. Support them, praise them, tell them you're proud of them, and let them know you can always be counted on for unconditional love...regardless of the score.