



Parents Should Lead Cheers

By Bill Gosse

Posted June 9, 2007 in the Green Bay Press-Gazette

To the kids who play in a sport, who are the most important people watching them? It's not the coach who instructs them. It's not the official correcting them. It's not a scout in the stands.

To kids young and old, their parents are the most important people at any sporting event. Kids want to please their parents, and the most important thing that parents can do is to positively express their pride in the child's efforts. A parent is a different kind of fan in that a parent is a fan with a vested interest; an emotional tie. Once parents have kids participating in sports, their interest level usually goes way up. Unfortunately, sometimes it goes way too high. They can cross the line when they get emotional and display some truly unacceptable behavior. It's easy to become emotionally involved at a contest and say, or do, things you regret later. Most of us have been there, and typically this bad behavior is directed at the coach or the official. But it can also be misdirected toward the kids.

When this behavior comes out at a game, the parents are failing to provide their kids with what the kids need the most; their undying positive support. As parents, we should be cheerleaders for our kids - not critics of the coaches or officials. The growing trend of parents forgetting their role has presented all of us parents with a challenge. Of all athletes aged 5-18, 70% are quitting sports by age 13. Why? Kids aren't having fun anymore. Here's an example of how that can happen. A high school girl was competing in a basketball game for her school. She was quite excited for that particular game because her relatives, including her grandparents, were there to watch her play. During the game, her team was falling behind and her relatives started to get emotionally involved in the game. They got to the point where they were yelling at the top of their lungs at the officials and her coaches. It got so bad that she became distracted, down-right embarrassed, and through her tears, she yelled right back at them during the game, begging them to stop. Is this the proper way to "support" this girl? She was looking for positive support that day, but what she got is happening more and more in our stands because parents are forgetting their role - losing sight of why they come in the first place.

If everyone remembers their roles, parents will be positively supporting their kids, the rest of the fans in the stands will be encouraging their team, coaches will be coaching, officials will be officiating, and athletes will be competing. If everybody sticks to their roles, the games will seem simpler again, and EVERYONE will be having fun. Then maybe kids will stop quitting sports at an early age and they will be able to learn the wonderful life lessons sports can teach them through winning AND losing. Most importantly, the kids will be able to enjoy the ride home afterwards.