

SIGNS OF AN IDEAL SPORTS PARENT

- **Cheer for everybody on the team:** Parents should attend as many games as possible. Be supportive, yet allow young athletes to find their own solutions. Try to avoid coming to their rescue at every crisis. Continue to make positive comments even when the team is struggling.
- **Model appropriate behavior:** Contrary to the old saying, “children do as you do, not as you say”; when a parent projects poise, control and confidence, the young athlete is likely to do the same. Some adults have the false impression that by being in a crowd, they become anonymous; this is not the case. Your child will still hear and see you, so will all other players and spectators. When a parent doesn’t dwell on a bad call, playing time, or tough loss, during and/or after the game, the young athlete will be enormously appreciative.
- **Know what is suitable to discuss with the coach:** Discussion regarding the mental and physical treatment of your child, seeking advice on ways to help your child improve, and concerns regarding your child’s behavior in the team setting are all appropriate conversations to have with a coach.. Taboo topics you want to avoid: Playing time, team strategy, discussion of team members other than your child, discussion of team parents.
- **Know your role:** Everyone at a game is either a player, a coach, an official or a spectator. It’s wise to choose only one of those roles when entering the playing facility. If you enter the facility as a spectator in support of your child, focus on the positive, setting a great example and cheering on your team.
- **Be a good listener and a great encourager:** When your child is ready to talk about a game or has a question about the sport, be all ears. Provide answers while being mindful of avoiding becoming a helicopter parent. Above all, be positive. Be your child's biggest fan. Good athletes learn better when they seek their own answers.

We encourage parents to avoid the following:

- **Overemphasizing sports at the expense of sportsmanship:** The best athletes keep their emotions in check and perform at an even keel, win or lose. Parents demonstrative in showing displeasure during a contest are sending the wrong message. Encouragement is crucial -- especially when things aren’t going well on the field. Focus on what your team needs to do better, not what the other team or officials are doing wrong.
- **Having different goals than your child:** Write down a list of what you want for your child during their sport season. Your son or daughter can do the same. Vastly different lists are a red flag. Kids generally want to have fun, enjoy time with their friends, improve their skills and win. Parents who write down “getting a scholarship” or “making the All-Star team” probably need to adjust their goals. Athletes say their parents believe their role on the team is larger than what the athlete wants it to be.
- **Treating your child differently after a loss than a win:** Almost all parents love their children the same regardless of the outcome of a game, yet often their behavior conveys something else. Many young athletes indicate that conversations with their parents after a game influence that athlete to believe their value as a person is somehow tied to the win or loss.
- **Undermining the coach:** Young athletes need a single instructional voice during games. That voice has to be the coach. Kids who listen to their parents yelling instruction from the stands or even glancing at their parents for approval from the field or court are distracted and can't perform at peak level. Second-guessing the coach on the ride home is just as damaging. Remember, a parent plays one role – spectator, coach, official, or player.
- **Living your own athletic dream through your child:** Avoid taking credit when your child does well; “We worked on that shot for weeks in the driveway,” or “You did it just like I showed you”. If the outcome of a game means more to the parent than the child, that parent needs to assess why the child wants to play and get on the same page. If you as a parent are still depressed by a loss when the child is already off playing with friends, remind yourself that it’s not your career and you have zero control over the outcome.