

## *How To Be A Good Soccer Mom And Dad*

© Kansas City Soccer Scene

We contacted ten coaches with eight different soccer clubs and asked this simple question: What is a good soccer Mom or Dad? Surprisingly, the answers were the same whether the coaches came from Gladstone, Raytown or Overland Park, were premier or recreational. Here are their answers.

First, do not coach your child during the game. Four coaches lamented the tendency of parents to praise the wrong things and criticize the right things. One coach complained, "We worked for two weeks on teaching the lads to pass the ball wide and keep possession. Two minutes into the game parents were yelling, 'kick the ball out of there.' No pressure, but still the lads would boom the ball out of the back. Defeated all that work."

Another coach described practicing defense and teaching players to shadow and not "dive in" only to hear parents shouting, "don't let him dribble like that!" After hearing dad's shout, the boy went in for an ill-timed tackle, which the other player easily evaded.

A Northland coach said, "I just wish they'd be quiet and let me coach. That's my job. I don't go to their job for them. Most never played the game. They do not know what the boy should do, but [mom and dad] shout 'pass the ball', 'kick it out', or 'stop him'. And, they're always wrong. Makes you wonder why they pay me to coach."

Children will hear your voice above all others. They are trained to obey your voice. Your very voice is distracting. You shout, your child turns her head away from the play to listen to you and loses track of the play.

All of the coaches agreed that comments like, "Great play!" are fine. What the coaches do not want to hear are instructions, directions and coaching from the sideline. They love it when parents praise and applaud.

Second, do not talk to the center referee or assistant referees. Most parents seem to feel that all referees are candidates for laser eye surgery. For the coaches we quizzed, comments about referees during the game often got out of hand. The parents' shouts of "Hand Ball", "Call it both ways," or "DIDN'T YOU SEE THAT PUSH," only antagonize the referee and do not improve the quality of the calls.

Each coach laughed when asked if he knew of referees that punished teams with vocal parents. The most common response was, "They're out there." A Shawnee coach said, "I know who to talk to, how to talk, and when to shut up. The parents on my teams don't know any of this. [Parents] also don't know the rules. [Parents] have no credibility with the referees."

The coaches were again unanimous. Do not ride the referees. Moan under your breath and grin and bear it. If you want to shout at referees go to a Wizards' game.

Third, practice with your child. Practice isn't limited to a night or two a week with the team. At your next regular practice take some time from gossiping with the other parents and watch what the players do. At home have your child teach the new skills to you. Practice passing, headers and chest traps. Throw the ball in the air and have your child trap the ball.

Do not stop with skills work. Go to a local school track and run laps. Find a moderate hill at a park, and run sprints to the top. It will help your child's fitness and yours.

Finally, be early for practice and games. Every coach related how players arriving late disrupted practices. Young players needing to have their shoes tied. Players of all ages who arrive at games and practice with shin guards and shoes in hand, but not on their feet. Ten minutes is lost while the shin guards and shoes are slipped on and shoes tied; something that can easily be done in the car on the way to the practice or game.

By arriving early players can stretch and be prepared. Players should bring appropriate shoes, shin guards, a ball, and water to every game and practice. The ball should be properly inflated.

Last of all, good soccer moms and dads are on time to pick up their sons and daughters after each practice and game. The coach and the other parents are not baby sitters.

© Kansas City Soccer Scene