

HORRIBLE SPORTS PARENTS

All parents want to help and support their kids who play sports. And most are able to do so in ways that don't hinder others' enjoyment or put unnecessary stress on the players themselves. But a few parents seem intent on ruining it for everyone. Check out these warning signs to see if you are indeed a horrible sports parent.

1. COACHING FROM THE SIDELINE

Encouraging comments are welcome. Everyone wants a cheering section, and athletes often feed off the energy of the crowd. But parents (we're looking at you, Dad) shouting instructions from the stands is rarely helpful. First, it takes the player's focus off the field and puts it on you. Second, what you're telling the player to do may directly contradict what the coach is trying to communicate. The last thing you want to do is confuse your kid.

2. YOUR EXPECTATIONS ARE TOO HIGH

Even in the highest levels of varsity sports, only a small percentage of athletes go on to play in college. Of that number, a tiny fraction play big-time college sports. And from that collection of truly elite athletes, an even more minuscule number get a chance to play professionally. It's good to have dreams. It's good to set high goals. But the odds are against you and your young player. Approach the game with that knowledge.

3. CRITICIZING OTHER KIDS

OK, so your superstar QB son threw a perfect pass, but the wide receiver dropped the ball. Take a deep breath. The last thing you want to do is say something disparaging about someone else's kid, whose parents are likely sitting within earshot. Trust us, they feel awful enough about the play. Don't make it worse.

4. ARGUING WITH . . . JUST ABOUT ANYONE

Youth and varsity sports are tense. There's no debating that. A ton of emotion is involved in watching your kid play. Tempers can flare even among the calmest moms and dads. But if you're the type who likes to argue balls

and strikes with a high school kid umpiring a game, you're a special kind of unreasonable. Nobody wants to hear you berate the officials or argue with opposing parents. Just stop.

5. PLAYING THE BLAME GAME

Sometimes your kid will screw up. Sometimes his or her teammates will screw up. Sometimes the coach will screw up. Heck, sometimes your team will just get beat. Live with it. There's another game next week.

6. YOU THINK EVERY OPPONENT OF YOUR CHILD CHEATS

Your kid is a beacon of good sportsmanship with perfect on-field etiquette. The kids on the other side of the field are dirty miscreants who will stop at nothing to win the game. The only way your kid can win is to overcome the opposition's dirty deeds done dirt cheap. Oh wait, that's what those other parents are saying about your kid.

7. BRAGGING

Oh, Tommy got another call from Urban Meyer? He threw how many touchdowns last week? You don't say? Wow. It's just so interesting to hear about your kid's accomplishments. Again.

8. NOT LETTING YOUR KID HAVE A LIFE OUTSIDE OF SPORTS

Practice makes perfect, but there's a limit to how hard you should push your student-athlete. More important than transforming your child into a perfect baseball/softball hitting machine (or basketball shooter, soccer goalkeeper, etc.) is to let him or her evolve into a well-rounded person with interests and abilities outside of athletics.

9. YELLING AT YOUR KID IN FRONT OF EVERYONE

Accepting criticism is part of getting better. But there's a right way to do it and a wrong way. Loudly, in public is certainly a bad way. You'll embarrass your kid and put a bad taste in everyone's mouth.

10. SWEARING/COMPLAINING/BEING A LOUDMOUTH

Notice that empty buffer zone on the bleachers between you and the next-nearest parent? Your yelling is not entertaining, helpful or insightful. You know what it is? Annoying. Cut it out.

[Eric Barnes - Eric Barnes is STACK's Web Content Manager. A former newspaper sports editor, writer and columnist, he spent 10 years with The New York Times Company as an editor for print and digital...
Become a Contributing Expert](#)