

HEY, PARENTS, LISTEN UP!

Here are 10 rules to remember when you're on the sidelines at your kid's game.
by Rick Wolff

THINK before you act or speak. Here are 10 rules to remember.

1. CHEER, don't SNEER! Only positive words should come out of your mouth during a game. There is simply no place for negative comments or criticism.
2. WALK before you SQUAWK. If you feel a sudden urge to yell at the coach or the ref, take a walk and cool off before you say something that will embarrass you - or your child.
3. A YELL won't make the team JELL. Don't bellow instructions to your child from the sideline. It's boorish and your kid can't hear a word you're saying, anyway!
4. Don't sell them SHORT, be a SPORT. If the opposing team has played well, give them a pat on the back. Nothing makes a kid feel more special than when a parent from the opposing team tells him how well he played.
5. Don't point and BLAME when they lose a GAME. When your child's team loses, don't blame it on a bad call, a teammate's error, or anything else. How will your child learn to accept responsibility if you don't?
6. Give 'em a SMILE - not BILE. Kids always respond to the coach or parent who smiles - not to the adult who criticizes or scowls. Besides, your child wants to see you having fun.
7. RAISE with PRAISE. That's right, the kids will "raise" their game and their efforts if you praise them. Use any achievement as an excuse for a compliment. They want to believe in themselves. And you can help them.
8. **For Pete's SAKE, give the ump a BREAK! Remember, most of the umpires and referees are volunteers donating their time to your kids. And accept it: "Bad" calls are part of sports.**
9. PARALYSIS by ANALYSIS. Avoid replaying the game in the family station wagon on the drive home. If your kid brings the game up, fine. But chances are it's about the last thing he wants to talk about.
10. This I BESEECH, practice what your PREACH. With too many pro athletes talking trash and misbehaving, parents have to work extra hard to teach kids fair play. Make sure your own sportsmanship is flawless. You're the most important role models kids have!