

TWELVE DON'TS FOR DADS & MOMS

TWELVE COMMANDMENTS A PARENT SHOULD ADHERE TO WHEN THEY HAVE CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN YOUTH SPORTS

1. Don't put yourself in your son or daughter's place out there. The kid at third base isn't you, Dad (Mom). If he (she) makes an error, it's his (her) error; if his (her) home run wins the game, it's his (her) home run. Glory or grief it's his (her) ball game. Whether you were an All-American Legion shortstop or -more likely- couldn't make the church team even if the Preacher was your Father, (Mother) has nothing to do with your kid's performance. Yet, I once heard a parent tell a child who made a wild throw, "YOU EMBARRASSED ME".
2. Don't talk about the "BIG GAME" all day. Chances are the "BIG GAME" isn't as important to your centerfielder as it is to you, that's healthy. The youngster will usually keep the game in proper perspective – and keep pressure to a minimum – if only you will, Dad (Mom).
3. Don't criticize one of the other players even if the errant kid decides to read his (her) library book in right field. That's not only unseemly; it's dangerous. Because chances are the offending player's Mother (Father) is smoldering in the next lawn chair. She (he) will scratch your eyes out.
4. Don't yell instructions to your player "GET CLOSER TO THE PLATE, SON! (DAUGHTER)" when it's his (her) time to bat. That's the coach's job and besides, the kid can pick your voice out in the tumult. It only makes him (her) more nervous. Shout only general encouragement.
5. Don't start analyzing your child's performance right after the game. All the player wants is peace, quiet and a snow cone.
6. Don't criticize the coach, even if it's apparent that Billy Martin he isn't. Listen, this guy is going to some dusty, pot-holed Elementary School field after work and on Saturdays to throw batting practice in a hot sun. Before you complain think: "AM I READY TO GIVE UP ALL MY VALUABLE TIME FREE TO A BUNCH OF PREJUVENILES?" then shut up.
7. Don't complain when the good coach plays everybody and even goes with different starters every game – right down to the child who has a pathological dread of fly balls and the bespectacled babyface who hasn't swung at a pitch (I personally know that "PLEASE, LORD, LET HIM WALK ME" feeling) in three summers.
8. Don't abuse the umpire, Dad (Mom). Baiting the college kid who's calling the game for four bucks isn't calculated to inspire respect for authority demanded from your child at home and at school.
9. Don't decide your player has a future with the Los Angeles Dodgers. Likewise, don't write off that babyface with the bat on his shoulder. Kids, I'm told, mature athletically at different paces. Some are better than they ever will be again. Some of the worst players will develop into varsity athletes with time.
10. Don't forget to praise your child for simply performing. Don't overpraise a hit or a good play, either. And, above all, don't ever dwell on an error or failure to deliver the "BIG" hit – especially not with scorn or anger. You're not Vince Lombardi, Pop, and your kid doesn't play for the Packers. Your child is 12, at most.
11. Don't forget to praise all the players after the game, especially if they lost.
12. And please, Dad, (Mothers aren't nearly as bad about these things) don't take it so seriously. Even the "BIG GAME" isn't the Falkland crisis, and an answer to world hunger or even World Series -
LET IT JUST BE FUN.