

TOP CORNER

Parents 'Game day' guide

Welcome to the start the season.

What follows are some basic outlines on the conduct of a parent at a soccer game. It is based on what I have seen and experienced in my 15 years' experience of coaching youth soccer.

Firstly let me just make sure you're all aware, the purpose of this program is to develop soccer players. It is NOT to win soccer games at U8 level. You will see your children try things and play a certain way that is done so in order to help them progress and set them up to succeed at a higher level as they get older. They will get themselves into problematic situations and will have to find a way to solve the problems – we encourage this! A lot of the time it will come at the cost of gifting the other team with a chance to score and as a result losing occurs. Learning from these mistakes is the important moment we are after.

1) Encourage

Please make sure everything that comes out of your mouth is positive towards your child and everyone else's children. Children CARE what their parents think and say, the smallest remark can ruin the experience for the players.

OOoooo's and AAwww's are fine.

Grrrrr's and Arrrgghhhh's not so fine.

Don't yell about what your child should be doing (the coaches and myself will take care of that), yell about what they did well!

2) Don't reinforce a negative

Nothing makes us crazier than parents cheering a 'big kick'!!

What was the outcome of this big kick? 9.8 times out of 10 it has gifted the opposing team possession of the ball.

The coaches will be encouraging that the players keep the ball, don't encourage the opposite of this. A small pass to a team mate deserves a greater cheer than a 'big boot'!!

3) 'Shoot!!!'

One of the most stressful moments for players is when they run through on goal. Please don't add to the stress by screaming shoot at the players.

"Duh-Yeah Dad, I get it, I know I have to shoot, thanks for telling me"

4) Set an example

Don't criticize coaches or referees. We tell the players to play to the whistle and concentrate on what you have control over. We can't control how the referee sees the game, he will make mistakes we as players have to respond. If they see you getting irate with an official, they will think its ok for them to do so also.

5) The car ride home

Nothing negative, your child is in a vulnerable state, having just competed physically and mentally against another team, he/she is tired and drained. No doubt he/she would have made some mistakes. You do not need to dwell on them; we will fix those in practice and over time. Let your child know how proud you are of them, you're watching your 'baby' compete for the first time on a soccer field. This is a huge moment and the start of a healthy and active lifestyle.

6) Don't contradict the coaches

Some of you may have an idea of what soccer looks like, what you will be referring to is a finished product, we are at the very beginning. The focus for the first year is all on the individual. The players will be encouraged to dribble, perform skills learnt in practice and beat the opposition in 1v1 1v2 1v3 and even 1v4 situations. For this reason please don't shout at the players telling them to pass the ball. They have been told to move the ball down the field by dribbling themselves. Passing will come as they get older and can kick the ball over greater distances; there is plenty of time for that.

Players from both teams will be 'swarming' around the ball. Don't tell them to spread out; the coaches will take care of that. I want to see a player try and dribble out of trouble from within a swarm of players. This situation, under pressure only happens at this level. When they get older and teams spread out you can't recreate the moments we want to take advantage of. Do you think Lionel Messi was told to pass the ball when he was a kid? No! He was encouraged to dribble and master his skill set.

Many Thanks guys,

Enjoy watching your children develop and mature as athletes,

Tarl