

What can be
done when a
parent
misbehaves? ▶



Parents 'coaching' from the sidelines, criticizing the opposition, or verbally abusing officials and coaches are common examples of parents *misbehaving* in children's sport. Fortunately, the majority of parents and adult spectators do not engage in this sort of excessive behaviour.

Most parents spend their time silently watching the game or chatting with friends. However, one fanatical parent can ruin a child's experience and have a serious negative impact on the whole team.

Researchers have found that certain factors help to explain why some parents are intrusive. For example, the proximity of spectators to one another or to the players, familiarity with the game, and the closeness and importance of the game, as perceived by adults, are all factors that may indicate a greater inclination for parents to offer verbal comments or criticisms.¹

Another factor is the tendency to value winning above all else. In this case, parents constantly focus on what they perceive to be mistakes players, officials, and coaches make, especially in the crucial last moments of a game.

In an article in *Sports Coach* called "The Odd Angry Parent: What Are The Coach's Options?", John Evans advises coaches who are dealing with disruptive parents that prevention is the best cure. He suggests holding an orientation meeting to inform parents about the program's philosophy and goals and what is expected of parents during a practice or game situation. Coaches who find themselves with a disgruntled parent should meet the parent after-hours to discuss the problem openly and point out the negative effect such behaviour is having on the child and possibly the team.

Parents who are kept busy may have fewer opportunities to complain. For some parents, it can be useful to be responsible for a task which may focus their efforts on the well-being of all of the children. Scoring, being team manager, keeping statistics, umpiring, or being equipment manager are all good possibilities.

Parents are also less likely to intervene if they believe that the children are in the hands of a knowledgeable coach. Factors such as experience and coaching qualifications are important in convincing parents that the child is well-supervised.