



Five reasons why parents should not instruct during games

1. It Inhibits Expression And Creativity

In today's world, it is hard enough for kids to just be themselves, with social media now adding to an already potent mix of peer pressure children feel from a young age. Sport is one release, a respite from the daily realities of having to conform. At least, it should be. By instructing from the sidelines, parents, in trying to help, are simply adding another strand of pressure when sport should be about expression and development.

Let your kid try new things – even if they don't always come off – without worrying about people-pleasing on the field as well.

2. It Breeds Confusion

If coach Johnson is giving one set of instructions before a match and at half-time, it would be some coincidence if a parent was giving the same advice throughout a match. No, more likely is that a coach is saying one thing and a parent is saying something quite different. The result? Confusion for the child, who wants to please her coach and also her parent.

Confusion breeds anxiety and less enjoyment of the game. Let the coach do the instructing.

3. It Reduces Decision Making Abilities

How is a child meant to progress in sport if he is constantly having decisions made for him? Repeated instructions from the sidelines will reduce his ability to make choices for himself – a crucial skill not just for sport, but life in general.

By interfering on the field of play, a parent is inhibiting the development of a vital life skill which could cost the child as he grows older.

4. Children Will Not Learn From Their Errors

'You can learn from your mistakes' said the legendary France striker Thierry Henry. Now, Thierry's not going to be winning any awards for originality with that quote, but it still rings true. Making mistakes is vital to a child's development because it will enable her to learn how to improve. If she is constantly being hassled from the sidelines and told, for example, to 'play it safe' how will she ever learn to expand her range of passing and become a more creative player, whatever the sport?

Instead, allow a child to experiment and make mistakes – they will soon learn what works and become a better player as a result.

5. It Makes It Less Enjoyable

It's a cliché, but sport at a young age is about having fun. If the child, through a constant stream of instructions from the sidelines, starts to believe they are involved in a life or death situation, that's going to inhibit their enjoyment of the sport.

Let the child go out on the field and enjoy themselves without fearing the consequences if they mess up.

Instructions from parents can be well meaning, but can also do more harm than good. If, as a parent, you feel the need to instruct away from games, perhaps set up a private meeting with the coach to ensure you are both on the same page when trying to help your child.