



How To Handle Parents On The Sidelines

As a coach how do I handle the soccer parents on the sidelines?

One problem that confronts youth coaches is parents. Unfortunately, trying to figure out how to coach soccer requires more than just learning kids soccer drills. It also requires learning how to coach soccer parents, and teaching them how to behave properly.

The best way to handle parents is to lay out your expectations of them at the beginning of your time with the kids. It is best to be upfront about the fact that you are trying to learn how to coach soccer, and you would appreciate their input (privately, not in front of the players). Even though you are just starting to learn how to coach soccer, you are the teams coach, and parents should not second-guess your decisions in front of the players. If a parent is truly interested in helping, you can let them work with you as an assistant coach if you would like.

Let your parents know that the best thing they can do for the team is to be cheerleaders. Children are typically very sensitive to criticism from adults, and having parents on the sideline pointing out their mistakes will hurt their self-esteem, and will negatively affect the way that child plays in the future. Youth soccer players need to be encouraged. You may be asking them to do something different, or to play a position that is not comfortable for them. If a parent begins to criticize the child, that child will revert back to a more comfortable habit, even if it is the wrong thing to do.

One frustration that many youth soccer coaches endure is having parents that insist on coaching their child from the sideline. You may be trying to teach your defenders to set an offside trap, and the parents are yelling for the defenders to fall back, which allows the attackers to get that much closer to the goal. You may be teaching your wings to stay wide, and the parents are yelling for the wings to push in to help the center midfielder. You might be working on



short, controlled passes, and parents are yelling for the ball handler to make a long pass. The point is, parent don't always know or understand your game strategy, or what you are trying to teach your players. The more you learn how to coach soccer, the more you will be trying new things during games. Parents that don't respect what you are trying to do will cause serious problems between you and your players.

Explain to parents that the amount of time their child will get to play depends on how well they attempt to do what you tell them to do. If a child's father tells them to do something different, there is a good chance the child will ignore you and listen to the parent. If you tell them to make the short pass, and the player listens to dad and boots the ball long, you will end up pulling the child from the game for not listening to you. It's a situation where nobody wins. Unfortunately, it happens time all the time during youth soccer games.

It comes down to getting the parents to understand that even though you may be just learning how to coach soccer, you are the coach. The more they can support your decisions in front of the children, the easier your job is, and the quicker your team will learn what you are trying to teach them.