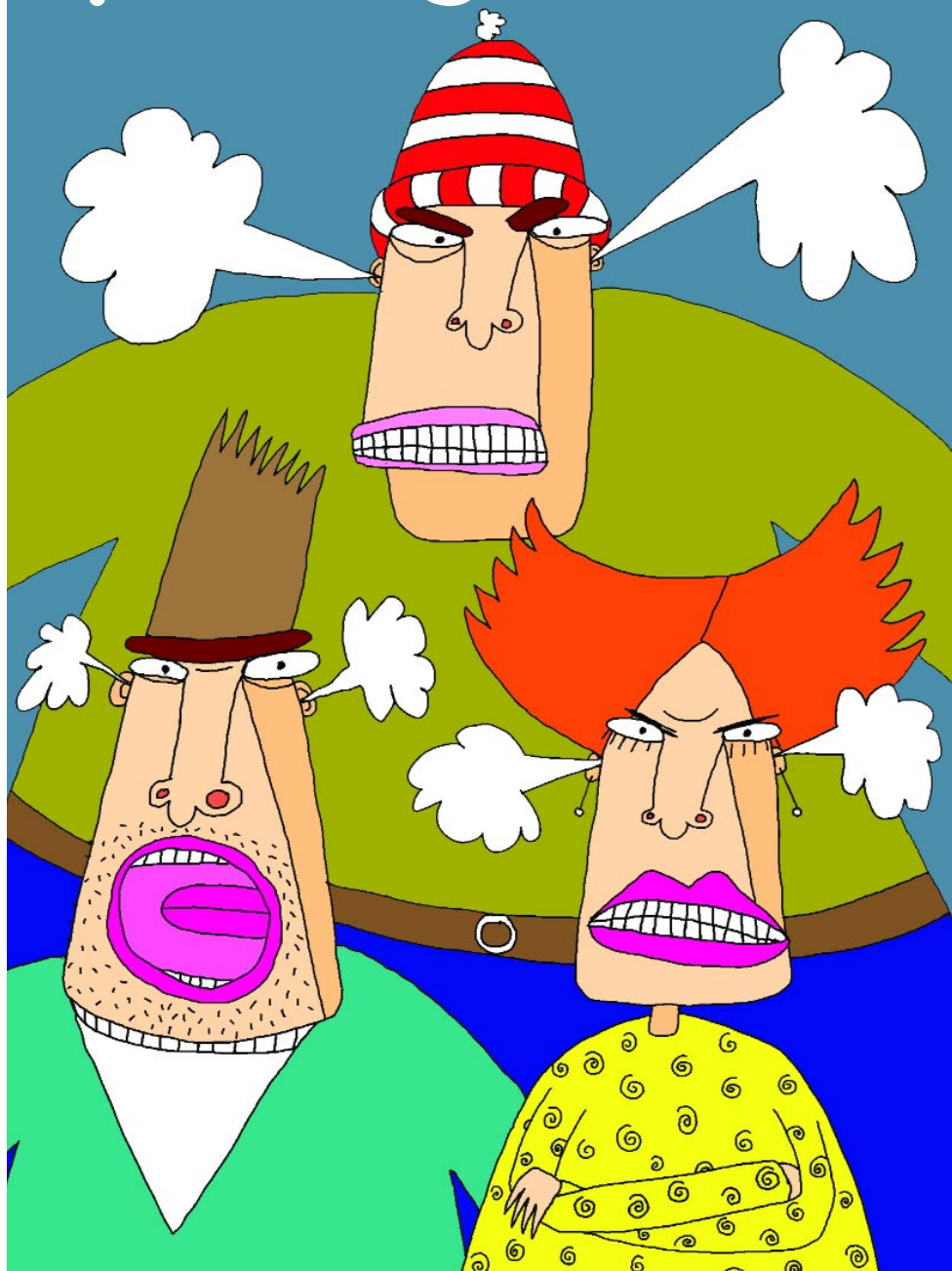


sport rage

A prevention guide
for parents



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NSW Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation

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Fair Play – It's Your Call A Resource Manual for Recreation Directors

Fair Play – It's Your Call A Resource Manual for Officials

Fair Play – It's Your Call A Resource Manual for League Organisers

Produced by American Sport Education Program

SportParent Survival Guide

www.soccerparent.com

Soccer – Sideline guide for Parents

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Kids' Sport – A very real guide for grown ups
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Graphic design: Jennifer Barrett
Authors: Kerry Turner, Lucinda Jenkins,
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Editor: Shannon Dixon

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about sport rage

We all know that sport is a great pastime and an important part of Australian life.

For children in particular, sport is a great outlet to learn lessons about teamwork, rules, winning and losing – while keeping them fit and healthy.

So it's a crying shame that for many young people sport is not what it should be due to the growing incidence of '**sport rage**'.

Sport rage is violence, bad language, abuse and general bad behaviour by players, coaches, officials or spectators.

Sport rage, like road rage, is a growing concern as we live in a faster more stressful society.

While friendly rivalry on the sporting field is a healthy part of growing up, when the line between competition and aggression is crossed there are no winners.

Simply put, **sport rage** is bad for children and bad for sport as a whole. At its worst, **sport rage** reduces a child's enjoyment of sport, undermines the benefits and can lead to drop-out.

Dealing with **sport rage** is becoming a major challenge for clubs. Not only does it reflect badly on their sport, it can deter participation at all levels. The effect on volunteer coaches, referees and officials is especially serious, with many 'hanging up their whistles' because they are fed up with the abuse and harassment.

It's important that everyone involved in junior sport unite to combat **sport rage**.



preventing sport rage

Parents can play an important role in preventing **sport rage**.

While **sport rage** is often the result of many factors, parents can reduce incidents by being good role models and helping to create a positive sporting environment.

There are six important considerations for all parents:

- 1 Understand what children want from sport
- 2 Encourage fair play
- 3 Keep your emotions in check
- 4 Respect the coach
- 5 Respect referees and officials
- 6 Uphold the code of conduct.

Each is explained in more detail below.

1 Understand what children want from sport

Sport provides many valuable learning experiences, but for most children enjoyment is the most important outcome. If they don't have fun, they will not want to play.

Ask your child and you'll discover the scoreboard is not that important. They may not remember the score from a game played just two weeks ago – but will recall a funny incident or who they played with after the match. In fact, one of the most satisfying things about sport for children comes from being with their friends and being part of a team.

As a parent, help your child get maximum enjoyment from soccer by focussing on what they like most about the game.

tips 1

Emphasise trying hard and having fun, not winning

Don't pressure your child – it's their game, not yours

Never criticise or ridicule your child's performance

Discuss what your child enjoyed about the game

Emphasise the importance of effort and having fun, rather than the score. Tell your child you love them and enjoyed watching them, regardless of the game's outcome.

And remember to keep it all in perspective. Less than three per cent of children who play competitive sport will ever reach an elite level. But 100 per cent can have a chance to enjoy their sport if we let them!

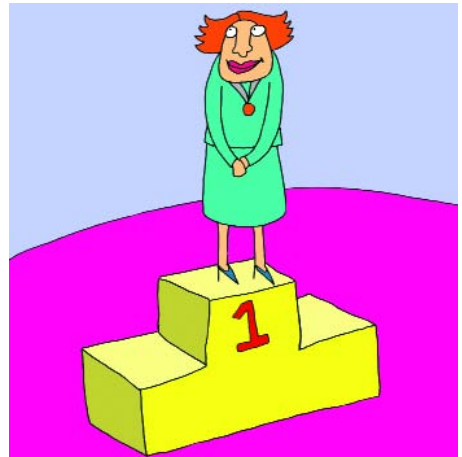
2 Encourage fair play

Sport provides children the opportunity to learn the principles of fair play – respect, integrity and fairness.

By adopting these values, children will get the best out of sport and, importantly, demonstrate good sporting behaviour both on and off the field.

Parents should discuss fair play with their children and be good role models.

Your child will learn to respect their opponents by seeing you do the same. They'll accept the referee's decision if you do. And they'll be the first in line to shake the other team's hands if you've shown how important it is to do so.



tips 2

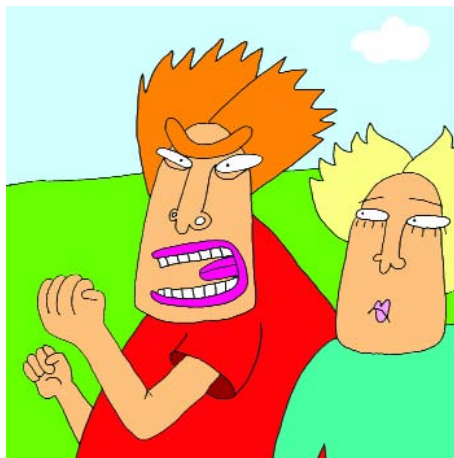
Be a good role model

Show respect for opponents, spectators and officials

Cheer and acknowledge good plays by both teams

Thank the referee, coach and other team after the game

Visit www.playbytherules.net.au to learn more about fair play.



tips 3

Leave the stress of daily life behind

Be enthusiastic, but don't yell instructions from the sideline

Don't get into shouting matches with anyone

Address coaching or refereeing concerns after the game, out of view

Don't use bad language or harass others

tips 4

Always set a positive example

You and your child should thank the referee after the game

Accept decisions by referees and other officials

Deal with issues professionally after the game

3 Keep your emotions in check

Unruly adult emotion at children's sport is **sport rage** at its worst.

As a parent you should leave the stress and tension of daily life behind when going to your child's soccer match. Concentrate on how to make the day enjoyable for your child. It's important to get off to a good start by being organised for game day, so everyone leaves the house calm and prepared.

While some sideline emotion can be well intentioned, such as repeatedly shouting your child's name, always consider the impact it is having. In this instance, you might be embarrassing your child and irritating others.

Outright bad behaviour, such as abusing a referee or ridiculing the opposition, is unacceptable. Keep in mind what children want from sport – a refereeing decision that annoys you will probably go unnoticed by your child. But your loud and abusive sideline outburst won't.

4 Respect the coach

Coaches and team managers play an essential role in providing a sporting experience for your child. Without them there would be no team and no game so show respect for the people in these roles and always treat them with courtesy. In general, parents should interact with the team manager and leave the coaching to the coach. If you want to speak with the coach ask the team manager to set up a meeting.

5 Respect referees and officials

Referees and other officials are there to make the game fair and more enjoyable for everyone. They are human and may occasionally make mistakes.

It is important that you understand this – and that you explain it to your child. Your behaviour towards referees and officials will affect their attitude.

Parents should never approach the referee directly. If you have an issue with refereeing, coaching or administration raise it in a controlled and professional way with appropriate people (The Blacktown Soccer Referees Association or your Club Association) after the game and out of public view.

6 Uphold the parent code of conduct

The Blacktown and Districts Soccer Football Association (BDSFA) has implemented codes of conduct for referees, administrators, coaches, and parents.

It's important you understand, support and uphold the parent's code of conduct.

The BDSFA and your club are entitled to enforce this code. For example, while it may not be a criminal offence for a parent or spectator to verbally taunt an opposition team, such behaviour may well breach the code of conduct. As such, the BDSFA or your club are entitled to discipline people who breach the codes in accordance with their disciplinary procedures.

Refer to the back of this booklet for the anti-sledge pledge: parent code of conduct.



tips 5

Support and uphold the BDSFA code of conduct for parents (anti-sledge pledge)

Don't drink alcohol at junior matches or arrive at the field intoxicated

Is your behaviour on the sideline contributing to a safe, happy sporting environment?

Or could your actions be creating tension and sport rage?

Take this quiz – which sport parent are you?

The Screecher

The Screecher sees all the negative things on the field. Everything is going wrong and they yell constantly. They yell at all the players and the referee. **The Screecher** focuses on the negative and is sometimes verbally abusive to the players. **The Screecher** must learn to see the positive things in the game and make an effort to ignore the mistakes.

The Try Hard

The Try Hard is the super positive one. **Try Hards** get so excited they yell out every time their child even gets near the ball. They cheer so much the kids get embarrassed – particularly when their baby nickname gets used too often. It is important for **The Try Hard** to learn how to balance their enthusiasm.

Self test: Which sport p



The Analyst

The Analyst takes notes to analyse the performance for the week to come – worse still, taking the video to do the same. **The Analyst** then relives the match with their child pointing out all the things they could do better. **The Analyst** needs to learn to leave the coaching to the coach.

arent are you?



The Wannabe

The Wannabe is living their life through their child. **The Wannabe** remembers their own skill levels (usually higher than they actually were) and assumes that their child is at the same level. They treat their child's game as if it was their own. At the extreme, **The Wannabe** may withdraw the after match play time with friends or treat at the canteen if the team loses the game. Even worse, **The Wannabe** may withdraw affection from their child. **The Wannabe** needs to drop the 'win at all costs' attitude and remember it's their game not yours.

The Not Really There

The Not Really There is so busy catching up with the news for the week and talking on the phone that they pay no attention to the game at all. When the game is over they offer no encouragement and make no positive comments about improvement or the game. **The Not Really There** should remember that sport offers some very important life skills for children and a little encouragement goes a very long way.

The Five Star Parent (You?)

The Five Star Parent focuses on the effort and not the outcome. They respect the officials who are providing their child with the opportunity to be involved and remember to thank them. They are positive supporters and keep in mind the role they are playing on the sideline.

dealing with **sport rage**

Despite your best intentions, **sport rage** incidents will occur. While it's your club's responsibility to deal with incidents, parents should understand and support the process.

Here's what you need to know about dealing with **sport rage**.

Codes of conduct can be enforced

Familiarise yourself with the BDSFA codes of conduct for parents, referees, coaches and administrators. You should be aware of the people who have agreed to abide by each code and against who they can be enforced.

Inappropriate behaviour should be reported

If you witness behaviour which contravenes the BDSFA's code you should approach your club's appointed ground official for the day and notify them of the behaviour. It is not your role to approach the offender(s) as this can further escalate the situation. If you're unsure who the ground official is, report the incident to a club committee member.

Warnings are issued

The first time a person engages in inappropriate conduct, they might be issued with a warning that their conduct is inappropriate and breaches the code of conduct. If the action is serious, immediate disciplinary charges can be made.

Disciplinary action can be taken

The BDSFA and each club is responsible for taking disciplinary action against persons who breach their codes of conduct. While this may involve a warning, it can also include suspension, expulsion or requiring the person to participate in a counselling session. You may need to assist the BDSFA or a club if it is hearing a charge laid against a person for inappropriate behaviour directed towards you or another person at a game which you attended.

People can be removed from the field of play

People can only enter the field of play with the permission of the referee. Referees should communicate directly and immediately with the ground official to remove unauthorised people from the field.

People can be removed from the venue

If your club is in a position to control ground entry, then it will be able to evict persons from the ground if they contravene the code of conduct. Where attendance is not controlled, clubs can request offenders leave the venue, or otherwise discipline the person for breach of the code.

The referee may suspend the game

The referee may suspend play and refuse to restart the match until appropriate action has been taken if there has been a breach of the code of conduct. The referee may request that a person is removed from the sideline area to a place where they can no longer interfere in the game. In the case of a serious breach the referee may abandon the game all together.

The police should be involved if appropriate

If you feel the behaviour of an individual (including players, coaches, officials or spectators) constitutes a criminal act the police should be immediately notified. You should notify the ground official and request that the police be called.

While it is lawful for a club to detain a person who has committed a criminal offence until the police arrive, it is recommended that they only resort to this if necessary. Club officials are able to exercise reasonable force in carrying out such action, but not disproportionate to the conduct of the offender.

case study: ugly sideline behaviour



Helen's son Tom plays in an under 10 soccer team and she tries to attend two or three of the team's matches each season.

During one match she attended Helen was horrified at the behaviour of a group of parents of Tom's team who "supported" the team's players by loudly chastising mistakes and laughing at the errors of less skilled players.

When Tom missed a penalty shot at goal, the group of parents loudly suggested to the coach that he replace Tom with another player because Tom had no skills and was clearly letting the team down. The coach ignored the suggestions.

Helen was furious and approached the group of parents ready to abuse them for their insensitive comments. Fortunately, the team manager saw what was happening and intervened to advise Helen that he would take the matter up with the parents in his official capacity.



Helen was pleasantly surprised to watch the team manager advise the parents of their breach of a code of conduct by pointing to a copy of the code he kept on a clipboard. The parents were told to improve their behaviour or face disciplinary procedures by the club committee.



Helen made an effort to attend more of Tom's games during the season and witnessed a marked improvement in the behaviour of the particular group of parents.

Anti-sledge pledge: parent code of conduct

BDSFA has implemented codes of conduct for all its stakeholders, including parents.

Please make yourself familiar with the code as it applies to you as a parent.

- I won't pressure my child in any way – I know that this is their game not mine!
- I will not use bad language, nor will I harass players, coaches, officials or other spectators
- I will encourage my child to play within the rules and respect officials' and coaches' decisions – no matter what
- I will teach my child not to hate their competitors but to admire and respect their skill
- I will remember that children learn best by example so I will applaud good plays/performances by both my child's team and their opponents
- I will give positive comments that motivate and encourage continued effort
- I will teach my child that doing one's best is as important as winning, so that my child will never feel defeated by the outcome of a game/event
- I will focus on my child's efforts and performance – not the score
- I will thank the coaches, officials and other volunteers who give their time to conduct the event for my child
- I will help when asked by a coach or official
- I won't criticise or ridicule my child's performance after the game – I realise that good fun is more important than a good win
- I will not drink alcohol at junior matches or arrive at the field intoxicated.

I agree to abide by this code of conduct and to be subject to the rules and policies of the BDSFA and my club.

This is my parent's pledge.

Parent's signature

kids' comments

'I play sport because it's fun and you'll be able to still move when you grow old.'

'My dad is great – he just watches.'

'We don't have a score board, but we do have the best meat pies.'

'I don't play anymore because mum used to yell too much. I got sick of it.'

'I play sport because I enjoy it and it's fun. I met my best friend playing netball.'

'When people won't shake hands at the end of the game – that's bad sports behaviour.'

'I don't really care who wins as long as I have fun... although it's good to win at least once.'

'One of the refs got his car scratched just because one of the teams lost the game.'

'When spectators yell at the referees it's like that person has wrecked the game for everyone.'

'I don't mind if I don't win every time I play – in every game someone has to lose.'

'I feel good when we score a goal, I guess the other team must feel the same when they score.'

Taken from Sport Rage seminar and extracted from Kids Sport – A Very Real Guide for Parents (Denis Baker)

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