

Parents: A few pointers for the next sporting event

By SUZANNE KENNEDY

It's summer, which means chances are good that you have a break from kids' sports. A tiny one, maybe — at least once Little League is over. What a fabulous time to sit back, unwind, and replay all of the sideline parent antics that go hand in hand with sports. You might recognize a little bit of yourself in one of these descriptions.

Mr. "I Didn't Sign up to Coach, but I'm Going to Yell Directions Anyway." If you want to coach, get out on the field. Kids can't hear the actual coaches when parents are yelling at them. Sure enough, I have called out to my child to "choke up on the bat." Keep in mind that I have played one game of softball in my life, and that was a game between two stores in the mall where I worked as a teenager. The Gap had nothing on us.

Mrs. "I Only Cheer for My Own Child." Step out of your bubble. Your kid plays on a team. Only cheering for your child gives him or her an exaggerated sense of self. Raise a team player. It's also fun to confuse your child by cheering for the opponents when they complete a great play.

The Loud Talker. Someone sitting at the other end of the bleachers



should not be able to hear your conversation, whether you are speaking to someone next to you or talking on your cell phone. We are not interested. Unless it actually is interesting. In that case, please expect to see a lot of other parents

nudging each other and nodding in your direction.

The Rehash-the-Game-on-the-Way-Home Parent. You know how you feel when you work really hard on something and someone points out the one tiny thing that was missed? That's how your kids feel when the ride home from the game becomes a play-by-play of "should have." The only things you should be saying after the game are: "It was so much fun watching you play!" and "Please take a shower because you stink."

The Unfriendly Loner. Look, some days, we are all miserable out there watching our kids play. It's too hot, too cold, too windy, the bleachers are too hard, and our

camp chairs have no back support. There's no need to suffer alone. Getting to know other families makes it more fun. You never know, you might end up on another team together. Even better, you might be able to bum a water off of someone when your child forgets to bring one even though he was reminded 17 times. So, get off your phone and join in the fun. Well, it's okay to be on the phone if you are ordering a camp chair with better lumbar support. If that's the case, get one for me, too.

Okay, here's some serious advice. Never, and I mean never, shout out comments about a bad call. It's just not your place. If your beef is with the referee or umpire, speak to your child's coach. He or she will know how to take care of it. If you have an issue with the coach, wait until you can speak privately. The athletes should not hear any of it. This goes for relatives as well. Grandmas and grandpas gain nothing from yelling out insults, even if they are in the right. It's embarrassing for the other parents and for the team.

Most importantly, listen to your children. If they ask you not to yell, or not to call out certain things, comply. Stepping out onto the field is like stepping out onto a stage. Most athletes feel like all eyes are on them and kids are so easily embarrassed. By following these simple rules, you can keep the joy in Mudville for another day, even if your kid is the one who strikes out.

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