

Parentally Speaking - October 2007

Is it possible for parents to cheer too much during a game?

Of course parents are going to attend their kids' games and are going to cheer and be supportive. They want to see their kids do well and have every right to express themselves. Unfortunately, some parents seem to think supporting their children includes harassing, heckling or otherwise making remarks directed toward the other team or the officials.

It's not realistic to think that we can silence the entire crowd. In fact, cheering for your team and encouraging the players can really add to the atmosphere at any sporting event. What's important to remember is that, as parents and supporters, we should strive to maintain an even keel. Don't get too loud and excited when things are going well, and don't get too down or negative when things start to fall apart on the field.

Imagine this scenario: Your child's team is playing in a baseball game, and they look unstoppable. They score 10 runs in the first two innings while the parents are cheering loudly, applauding, using noisemakers and laughing. Everyone is excited. But, during the next three innings, the other team slowly fights its way back into the game, finally taking the lead in the fifth inning. With each run scored by the opponents, your team's supporters get a little more quiet – to the point that you can hear a pin drop when the other team pulls in front. Then there are some negative comments.

How do you think the kids on the field are going to react to that scenario? They are going to feel the pressure of having blown the lead and feel like they have let their parents down. They are going to get tight and make even more mistakes. There will be sense of panic. This is when they need your support most, but when they look around, all that they hear is silence – or negative comments.

This roller coaster of emotion is not a healthy environment for youth players. All that I am suggesting is that as parents we keep the game in perspective. Encourage your kids the same way when they are winning as you do when they are losing. Don't say anything to the opposing team's players unless you want to compliment their play or effort. Make sure to tell everyone on the team that he or she did a good job. If you don't get too high or too low, your kids should respond similarly on the field – and hopefully, as they grow older, in every day life.

By Cal and Bill Ripken