

Parents: Should I stay or should I go?

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Just as children have, parents have undoubtedly changed compared to previous generations. [Parents](#) are now held responsible for their child's behaviour and performance 24/7.

Parents feel they are evaluated in public on their parenting particularly if their child is involved in a goal oriented activity. They can see their child's errors and behaviour as a reflection on their parenting skills. Of course they are not, but that is how many parents feel.

They are now tied into the success of their child and feel that they have a moral obligation to involve themselves in any part of their child's development. A culture has been created that if they don't fight for their child then nobody else will.

A generation ago parents would drop their children at a sports session, go and do their weekly chores and then collect them at the end of the session.

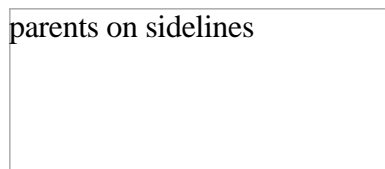
This does not mean that they never watched matches or took an interest but they didn't micro-manage and analyse every training session and dissect them to their bare bones.

An almost 'groupie' style culture has enveloped children's sport from watching training through to even watching the warm up before matches.

Parents would never go into a classroom and analyse every question in a maths lesson. Of course if there was a problem in a certain area they have every right to be inquisitive and address it but they would not be present the whole time during the process.

How many children feel humiliated week in and week out by their parent's actions at a sports session?

parents on sidelines



Coaches have mixed views on whether they like or dislike having parents attend training sessions (*share your views by leaving a comment below*). On a personal note after 20 years of coaching it personally doesn't bother me if parents are watching however what I would say is that there is a definite impact on the dynamic of the session when they are present.

On the whole coaches would like to be left alone. To them parental interference is seen as a damning assessment of their coaching as the trust has not been completely passed on to them.

If parents are too involved at training, the child will look for guidance and reassurance from the sideline as opposed to focussing and listening to the coach.

Some children when parents are too close feel unnecessary pressure even to the point that they struggle to engage with being coached as they see this as being told off and look to see how their parents are reacting to what is simply a coach doing their job.

Too much involvement from the side dilutes the coaches message and influence and many parents remarks are often ill-timed and sometimes can be inaccurate.

Parents must also understand the body language that they are portraying on the sidelines. Arms folded, stern faced, dramatic flings of the arms will heap unnecessary pressure on the child as the child begins to wonder what the aftermath of the session is going to be in the car on the way home.

In the longer term by their behaviour the parent may be limiting the independence and [creativity](#) of their child, both valuable traits in successful long term athletic development.

If you must be present at your child's training session then parents need to stay a reasonable distance away to show that they are supporting whilst ensuring that their body language suggests they are very relaxed about how things are going even if on occasions they may not feel that way.

Parents are allowed to be involved and that is their right but it is striking the balance on the correct level of involvement. If they trust the coaching, and the culture of the organisation suits them then perhaps they may feel more inclined to leave the session as opposed to helicopter parenting.

Parents certainly need to be informed and engaged on what clubs and coaches are doing as positive reinforcement from them can allow the child to gain the most from their sporting experience.

There is no data to suggest that the more training sessions that a parent watches or is involved in has any correlation to the sporting success of the child in the longer term.

On matchday the coaching should be already done, guidance and tactical changes should be made by the coach but parents need to understand the main part of the instruction/interaction process has already been done in the training sessions. Match day is certainly not a time for parents to be too involved.

So I guess the million dollar question the next time you are heading to another training session is 'should I stay or should I go?'

How do you feel about parents watching every session? What would you like to see as coaches?

If you are happy what level of involvement do parents watching your sessions have? How close do they get to the proceedings?

I would love to hear your thoughts. Please leave a comment below.

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