

# The 4 sport parents coaches don't want to see...

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You might have seen the picture above circulating in the press a few years back. The picture is of the Hertfordshire Shield Cup Final match between Royston and Fullerians which ended 64 - 5. The father of one of Fullerians players entered the field of play to trip up an opposition winger, supposedly in a bid to reduce the likelihood of a further thrashing at the hands of their rivals (you can read the Daily Mail article below).

Now you don't have to be Sherlock Holmes to figure out there's a few things wrong with this sort of parental intervention. It's an extreme example which highlights how detrimental the actions of a parent can be on an individual, a team, a club and a sport as a whole. However, is physical intervention like the example above, the only way a sporting parent can have a detrimental influence on children's sporting experiences?

## 1)The shouter

You'll probably hear this parent before you see them. They are usually found on the sidelines (always a little bit too close to the sideline!) giving more than their fair share of feedback, coaching pointers and opinions sprinkled with some expletives and abuse of the referee. They think they are being "supportive", but don't realize chances are their child is embarrassed and wishes they would shut up. In fact, we are all pretty embarrassed and wish they would shut up.

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## 2)The analyst

This parent fancies themselves as a half time analyst or TV pundit on "Match of the Day". The drive home from the match always involves a play by play analysis of all the occasions their son or daughter did something wrong. That putt, that penalty or that long pass. All complete with the parents coaching points and tips on what they should have done and why. They think they are helping their child become better, but actually when poorly delivered this information just makes their child feel discouraged rather than motivated. This can lead to the child playing to please the parent, rather than their own enjoyment.

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## 3)The team selector

As a coach this parent is one of the worst. They are the ones who will quiz you on the starting lineup and why their son or daughter isn't playing as much as they (in their infinite wisdom) think they should be playing. They will put pressure on the coach to play their child, regardless of whether it's good for anyone involved. They think they are helping their son or daughter succeed, but actually the coach just wants the athlete to earn their spot, or play their role in the whole team. Usually this parent sees their child as the standout player in a team of average individuals and doesn't realize they are doing their child a disservice by failing to teach them how to dig in, develop grit and make themselves indispensable.

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#### 4)The agent

This parent has prepared a highlight reel and Youtube channel dedicated to their child's performances. Maybe their child made it to a state/county/professional academy level once. They enroll their child in every trial with a "professional" scouting agency because their child is "going all the way". Their son or daughter is world class and everyone should know it and appreciate it. Usually the sun shines out the child's backside too - although somehow that doesn't ruin the contrast on the Youtube videos! Oh and they have the stats....all the stats. Even though you didn't ask for them...or care! The agent often also acts as the team selector, because their child has to get playing time because the scouts are watching. They don't realize they are setting their son or daughter up for an almighty fall when reality kicks in.

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#### The fix

So, how do we set about resolving these problems which can so often negatively affect children's experience in sport. If you are the parent - stop. I mean **STOP!! DON'T BE THAT GUY!**

Encourage your child to develop their passion for the game, don't force yours down their throat. Furthermore:

- Let the coach be the coach
- Ask your child how they would like you to help them
- Find another way to be support the team/coach
  - wash the team kit
  - fill up the water bottles
  - help with transport
  - help with finding finances
  - don't contradict them

If you are the coach, it's worthwhile putting something together at the beginning of the season for parents about how to support their children (see links below). You can even have a parent's meeting about how you will coach the team, what your philosophy/aim is and how they can support you, so everyone is clear. I've also included a very useful resource I came across online, "[Positive Sport Parenting: Parent Self-Assessment](#)" taken from the National Federation of State High School Associations. This is a short self-assessment questionnaire you could give parents to make them aware of their own behavior. You can find out how to assess your results [here](#). You could even use it on yourself as a coach to be come more aware of yourself!

If you have a bad sport parent on the team, it is worthwhile taking the parent aside to reinforce that you appreciate they are trying to support their child and try to direct them into more positive ways of doing so. Consider the list above as potential ways the parent can have positive input. You could always try and make it blinding obvious what your priorities are with a sign like this!

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I found this Ted Talk by John O'Sullivan very thought provoking in this area. Please feel free to share it to your sports teams Facebook or Twitter, particularly if you know there are some bad sports parents on the team!

There's also this nice little video from the All Blacks...

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**Links:**

[Daily mail article](#)

[Positive Sport Parenting: Parent Self Assessment](#)

[Positive Sport Parenting: Self Assessment Results](#)

[RFU poster](#)

[Devon Rugby good parents code](#)

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