

Control Your Parents With Role Reversal

By David Clarke

A number of coaches have asked me how I stop the parents of my soccer players from shouting negative comments and picking out individual players for criticism from the touchline.

It starts on a social level - getting to know the parents, especially the ones that turn up week in and week out to stand and watch.



They do like to have a say in matters, so I always get them together at the start of the season just to remind them what I expect and to get any new parents up to speed with our thinking.

A parent meeting is where you can lay down the laws for the season ahead, and is the most important thing you will do.

Parents like discipline and guidance

Tell your parents:

- You must respect the referee, opponents and especially respect the players of your team.
- Any breach of this rule will result in players being left out of matches whether it is the player or the PARENT causing the problem - the player gets punished for parent misbehaviour.
- Parents like to be involved so tell them about training times, match preparation etc and then play your ace card...

Make the parents play a short match

- Tell the parents to sort themselves into two teams and get your players to stand on the sideline and scream and shout at them like parents do at matches. The children will love doing this.
- Get them to play a short game - 5 minutes each way - with the children shouting from the sidelines.
- Add some confusion yourself by shouting "CLEAR IT" or "SHOOT!"
- After the game ask them what they could hear from the sidelines. Most will say "nothing". Then ask them what they think their own children hear. They should see the folly of their ways.
- For the parents who did hear what was said - often what you the coach shouted - ask them if this instruction or direction helped them.
- The only thing that yelling directions or instructions to a player accomplishes is to distract them from their focus.

Role reversal has positive impact. Some parents will still yell their heads off, but generally it is only positive encouragement rather than negative instructions.