



Bridgwater & Albion Rugby Football Club

Positive Side-line Behaviour

Positive side-line encourages the following recommendations:

1. Before and after each game remind your child that you're proud of them. No matter how they play.
2. Show support and encouragement to all players on the field.
3. Let the coach "coach", while you simply spectate and enjoy the game.
4. Honour the decision of the referee. They make the call they believe to be the fairest.
5. Don't let the heat of the moment get to you. Ask yourself if your behaviour will embarrass your child or yourself later.
6. Thank the coaches and referees for their commitment and effort. Most junior sports officials cite abuse from parents as the most stressful component of the job, which can lead them to quit.
7. Prioritise fun. Have fun yourself, and make sure your child enjoys the game too.

As a rugby club we are keen to all positively contribute to your child's rugby experience.

This information guides you of what is expected of the club, the player and parents. When you are sure all safeguards are in place then you can be confident that your child is playing in a safe and fun environment.

Parent's side-line behaviour is important to the positive development of Age-Grade rugby.

Respect is essential to the game and in order for your child to live this value they must learn from adults. If Age-Grade players only experience pressure to achieve they are likely to become anxious about their performance in games and less likely to develop to their full potential.

The following behaviours are deemed to be poor side-line behaviours:

- Foul language, threats or aggression directed toward the coach, referee, player or even another parent.
- Providing excessive instruction or coaching from the side-lines. Often, in contrast to what the child's coach has instructed, generating confusion and embarrassment for players.
- Put downs of a child's abilities, in private, or in front of others.



Bridgwater & Albion Rugby Football Club

Positive Side-line Behaviour

Parents demonstrating poor sportsmanship:

When parents behave poorly at sporting matches, children are more likely to drop out of team sports. Too much emphasis on a 'winning is everything', makes the sport less fun, and more stressful for the child. Children are taught that mistakes are not okay and give up on trying for the fear of the consequences. Also, it's important for us to remember, and to remind our children that mistakes are natural, and only make better players. Junior rugby should be about teamwork, respect, enjoyment, discipline, keeping active, developing skills, but most importantly: having fun.

Blaming the referee:

When parents blame a referee for the result of a game, children learn to make excuses for outcomes. During a single match, thousands of decisions are made by referees, coaches and players. So, to focus on one single decision made by a referee, as the sole reason for the outcome of the game only teaches our children how to absolve themselves of responsibility for their own actions. This leads to children who are less resilient, and who give up when facing adversity, for they feel they have no control over outcomes.

When spectators criticise the referee, this sets an extremely bad example for children. Observing their parent abusing other adults teaches children that, they too may act disrespectfully towards authority figures. Once children learn behaviour like this, it's common for the rude behaviour to carry over into other areas of their lives, including school, family, and even work later in life. It's also important to remember that referees are often minors themselves, and only making calls they believe to be the fairest. They don't deserve the verbal abuse they are often at the receiving end of. If you have constructive criticism to offer, wait until the end of the game.

On the way home:

Not all poor spectator behaviour happens while the game is in play. Reports show many children receive criticism on their performance in the car journey home. While some children may be able to block out the yelling from the side-lines during a game, it is impossible to escape the criticism post-game. Not only does this contribute to sport dropout rates, but it can negatively affect a child's self-esteem, and contribute to fatigue. It's important to be supportive of your child, as your attitude may be the biggest contributor to whether they continue to enjoy sports or not and will help shape how confident they are as a player. Your opinion is very important to them. And, it may surprise you how many adults can report vivid recollections of criticisms during their junior sports days. It can affect a child's confidence for many years to come.



Bridgwater & Albion Rugby Football Club

Positive Side-line Behaviour

Legal Implications:

Sometimes, bad behaviour on the side-lines becomes more than just poor etiquette, and is, in fact, against the law. Examples of this include racial vilification, sexual harassment and common assault. Moreover, clubs have a responsibility to report illegal behaviours to police. Things said in the heat of the moment can lead to formal charges for parents. Junior sports should be enjoyable for children, and there's nothing that will put a stop to the fun faster than seeing your parent escorted off the ground by a police officer!

Responding to another parent acting poorly on the side-lines:

It can be quite intimidating to witness another parent acting aggressively on the side-lines, and it's for this reason that you can't ignore this. Also, if the behaviour makes you feel uncomfortable, imagine how frightening it is for your child and their teammates. Talk to the coach and stress how important addressing this behaviour is to you. Ultimately, they are responsible for the behaviour of their team's parent spectators and can impose penalties onto the child or the parent. Many clubs have policies to deal with abusive parents which may result in them being suspended or even banned from attending matches.

Please do not turn a blind eye to this problematic behaviour. Remind other parents of the club's code of conduct, and the consequences of breaching this code. Often, if you privately call a parent out on their poor behaviour, you can curb it before it gets out of hand. Sometimes, conflict may arise when one parent places their child on a pedestal, placing the blame for disappointing results on the other children. Discourage toxic behaviours by making positive comments from the side-lines and reminding other parents to focus on a child's strengths, and not their weaknesses.

Try not to engage in complaining about your child's coach with other parents. Often tempting, it can be a difficult habit to break, once started. If you feel you have legitimate concerns, talk with the coach to discuss. Remember that coaches want the best for their teams and should be receptive to your concerns.

Finally, please demonstrate respectful and positive towards the parents of the other team, and refrain from making negative comments about their players. When your child sees their parents exhibiting good sportsmanship, they are more likely to display it, too.

Formal Issue Agreed

Geoff Sluman, Head of Rugby & Vice-Chair. Feb 2020