

PARENTS GUIDELINES FOR HONORING THE GAME

The key to preventing adult misbehavior in youth sports is a youth sports culture in which all involved "honor the game." Honoring the game involves respect for the rules, opponents, officials, teammates, and oneself. You don't bend the rules to win. You understand that a worthy opponent is a gift that forces you to play to your highest potential. You show respect for officials even when you disagree. You refuse to do anything that embarrasses your team. You live up to your own standards even if others don't.

Here are ways that parents can create a positive youth sports culture so that children will have fun and learn positive character traits.

Before the game:

- Make a commitment to honor the game in action and language no matter what others may do.
- Tell your child before each game that you are proud of him or her regardless of how well he or she plays.

During the game:

- Fill your child's "emotional tank" through praise and positive recognition.
- Don't give instructions to your child during the game. Let the coach correct player mistakes.
- Cheer good plays by both teams.
- Mention good calls by the official to other parents.
- If an official makes a "bad" call against your team, honor the game and be silent.
- If another parent on your team yells at an official, gently remind him or her to honor the game.
- Don't do anything in the heat of the moment that you will regret after the game. Ask yourself, "Will this embarrass my child or the team?" Remember to have fun. Enjoy the game.

After the game:

- Thank the coaches for their commitment and effort. Thank the officials for doing a difficult job for little or no pay.
- Don't give advice. Instead ask your child what he or she thought about the game and then listen. Listening fills emotional tanks.
- Tell your child again that you are proud of him or her, whether the team won or lost.