

“C’MON REF!! CALL THE FOUL!!!” by Alan Stein, Jr

Having been involved at every level of youth sports for 40+ years - as a player, as a coach, and now as a parent - I recognize how well intended, but severely misguided, so many youth sports parents are.

Their sideline antics are taking the fun out of the game. Statistically we are seeing kids drop out of sports at an alarming rate. It breaks my heart.

Attention Youth Sports Parents:

Yelling, screaming, and berating a referee is abhorrent behavior that serves zero benefit.

Even if a foul was missed... you yelling it DOES NOT HELP IN ANY WAY.

1) The ref missed it. It happens. They’re human. They make mistakes. So what? It’s over. Move on. You screaming is not going to get them to change the call.

2) You are unconsciously teaching your child that it is OK to make excuses, to blame someone else, and to complain when things don’t go their way. This breeds entitlement and children that deflect accountability.

3) Referees are human beings. They have feelings. Giving them a hard time actually DECREASES the chance of the ‘next call going your way.’ Referees have unconscious biases just like you do.

4) You are drastically increasing chaos and making it harder for your child - and everyone else’s child - to focus, move to the ‘next play’, and have fun.

5) How come no parent ever yells at the referee when they miss a call on their child or their child's team (only when something happens to their child)?

"Hey ref, my kid keeps traveling... will you please call it?!"

"Hey ref, my kid has been camping out in the lane... can you call 3 seconds?"

"C'mon ref - my kid just fouled him!! Why didn't you call it?"

6) You are embarrassing your child. These words have NEVER been spoken in the HISTORY of youth sports:

“Hey, did you hear my mom & dad screaming at the ref during my game? How awesome was that?! Aren’t they the best?!”

7) You are making it a lot less enjoyable for the other parents. Remember, this game ain’t about you.

My advice?

Cheer if you feel compelled, or simply sit there quietly and enjoy watching your child do something they love.

That’s exactly what I’ll be doing this weekend at all 3 of my kid’s games....

Oh, and for anyone who says, 'Hey Alan, what about bad referees?'

My response? It doesn't matter if a referee is bad... that isn't the point. There are 'bad' people at every job and in every walk of life. As parents... it is not our job to judge a referee (or correct them or monitor them or hold them accountable).

Yelling at the referee is no different than if I went up and started verbally berating the people who abandon their shopping carts (which I would obviously never do)!

Bottom line is this - coaches need to coach, players need to play, officials need to officiate, and parents need to smile and cheer. As soon as anyone tries to do someone else's job... we have a problem.

And why is there an unwritten expectation that referees should be perfect? Think of how many times a player turns the ball over or misses a shot?

Mistakes are a part of the game. They are a part of life. Why would a referee be exempt? Why don't parents berate their child for every turnover and missed shot?

Because that would be inhumane and absurd. So why is it OK to do that to officials?

The answer? It isn't OK...