

## Modeling Good Sportsmanship for Parents by Coach Candrea

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Legendary Softball Coach

Good sportsmanship is not only a responsibility for coaches and athletes but a primary responsibility for parents in building a positive culture for our kids sport experience. How many times do you see irate fans take away from the action on the field by their rude comments to players, umpires, and coaches? This behavior is unacceptable from our players so why do we allow parents to spoil the experience. You always hear fans say that they have the right to say what they want and unfortunately we do not provide them a filter. It seems that this behavior not only happens at the professional and college levels, but even down to the youth level where the impact sometimes forces kids to not want to play the game any longer. As a coach, I know the impact of what I say and how I say it can have a huge impact on their confidence, self-esteem, and pride at an age where they are still trying to find out who they are as an individual. The line between being a supportive, engaged, sports-loving parent and applying too much pressure on kids is easily crossed. To avoid embarrassing your child and making he/she feel more pressure than he/she already feels about playing the game – there must be some guidelines for all involved to make the experience a positive one. “I am here to support you, but this is your thing” Release them to the game!

### During the game:

- Avoid criticizing the umpires – This teaches the child to have a victim mentality and reinforces that it’s okay to blame others for his/her performance. Even if the call is wrong, the umpires are human and do make mistakes. Model appropriate behavior – confidence & poise!
- Use encouraging comments during the game. Save constructive feedback for one-on-one discussions with your child after the emotion of the game has passed.
- Avoid coaching from the sidelines. Nothing frustrates a coach more than when a parent yells mechanical thoughts and becomes a distraction. If you want to coach, then coach!!! It is very important to have one instructional voice.
- Show unconditional support immediately following the game – win or lose – put your arm around your child and give encouraging feedback.

## Weekly Coach Tips



Easy tips to  
help you  
create a  
positive  
environment  
for your team

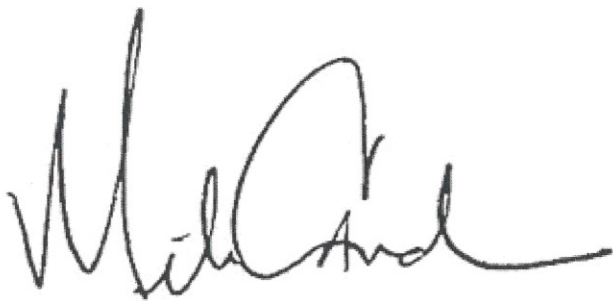
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- Focus on effort and improvement versus winning and losing. If the child believes it's all about winning, especially at the younger ages, she may come to believe that she will never please you. Comment on the improvement since the beginning of the season or since last year. Acknowledge how the hard work in practice will pay off and begin to show on the field. Your child will naturally bring up the topic of whether the team won or lost. Celebrate the victories – but tie them to specific behaviors. What did your team do that contributed to the win? Same for losses – what could the team do better the next time.
- A great thing to say to your child after the game is “I love watching you play!” Counter-balance your child's complaints about the umpires. Remind her that they are human and make mistakes. It is all part of playing the game!
- Don't make the topic of discussion on the way home all about the game! Never forget about showing your love for them and the game will never define who they are. If there is a discussion, make sure your emotions are gone and you have time to think about what to say. No kid plays bad or makes mistakes on purpose. The game we play is a game of failure and they need to learn how to handle the ups and downs. Great life lessons can be taught playing athletics so never forget the big picture.
- If your kid tries to avoid you after a game or if you celebrate wins or suffer losses more than your kid does – these could be considered red flags!
- Come clean if you do “lose it” during a game with your child. Let them know that you were frustrated or angry with the umpires, other team etc. It is not okay to demonstrate that frustration/anger with yelling and setting a bad example. This is why some leagues do not allow parents to watch – quite sad! This teaches your child that feelings are okay – but the way you express those feelings is not always okay. Apologize for embarrassing your child (even if she says she wasn't embarrassed – assume she was) and reinforce that this is an area you are working on improving. You will earn great respect in your child's eyes by “coming clean”.

We have a duty as adults to set an example and teach what is right and wrong. The foundation for our kid's future success in life is to understand that people should be treated as we would like to be treated. Remember, you set a standard every day and your actions speak louder than your words. Playing sports should be a great learning experience that teaches teamwork, discipline, and a fun experience. Make sure you are aware of your role 1) Spectator 2) Coach 3) Official 4) Participant. We can only choose ONE!

Until Next Month,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Candrea". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "C".

Coach Mike Candrea