

I sent out an email to a large number of coaches several years ago, asking them to answer one simple question. "What is the one thing you want parents to know?" I was able to capture the spirit of their answers in 5 Things.

FIVE THINGS COACHES WANT PARENTS TO KNOW

By Todd Howey

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Five Things
COACHES
Want Parents
TO KNOW



Todd Howey

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Todd Howey

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Thing Three:

Keep Off The Kids And Game Officials

Although it may seem so, merely paying an admission fee does not give a fan the right to verbally abuse an official, regardless of how bad the official may appear to be. It is not “part of the game” like many believe.

Some of the ugliest incidents school administrators deal with stem from a fan or fans losing their composure and saying and/or doing things they always regret later. There is simply no room for negativity coming from the bleachers, because it does absolutely nothing to enhance the playing experience for the kids.

Officiating is more than likely going to be below average at the sub-varsity level, but then again, so is the play. Most officials are just learning what to do, and negativity from the bleachers only hampers development and creates a hostile environment for both player and official.

In my many years of playing, coaching, and administrating, I have never seen an official blow a game. I have however seen officials blow calls; but an entire game, NO. You can ask any coach and they will tell you that an official NEVER lost a game for them.

Coaches are paid professionals, and they will manage the officials in a professional manner. That is the only acceptable way if we are truly trying to teach young men and women how to manage conflict and controversy in a positive way.

I remember watching a group of 11-year-old kids playing in a basketball tournament one day in Liberal, Kansas. The post player for the other team cleanly and clearly stuffed the shot of a player on our team. It was a clean block and without a doubt, he had “*all ball.*” The official blew his whistle and called a foul on the player, sending the kid he stuffed cleanly to the line for two shots.

In response to the official, the 11-year-old boy threw his hands in the air and screamed, “*Are you*

crazy?” The official blew his whistle again and gave the kid a technical foul, which he deserved.

After that foul, the young man then grabbed the ball and slammed it on the ground and yelled, “*You suck!*,” thus forcing the official to blow his whistle yet again giving the kid a second technical foul as well as ejecting him from the game.

What did his dad do?

Dad boldly stood up and screamed at the official, “*He is right ref, you suck! That’s ok son, you had all ball!*”

The father then stormed out of the bleachers, stepping over and on other parents in anger. He put his arm around his son and walked him out of the gym while they both glared at the official. Pathetic scene, pathetic parenting.

Instead of that dad disciplining his kid for treating an official disrespectfully, he takes his son’s side and gives his kid a lifelong lesson in how to be a poor sport. A lesson was learned, just the wrong one.

The sad part about that story is that the kid was just acting like his dad. They both acted like two-year-olds, and that kid only became a bigger poor sport than he already was.

Officials make very little money for their services and most of them do it because they love athletics and enjoy being around kids. Many of them are accountants, insurance salespeople, electricians, preachers, struggling college students, and most importantly, they are all human.

Have you ever officiated a basketball game? Have you ever called balls and strikes from behind a plate? I can assure you it is not easy, so either lay off or grab a whistle.

Screaming at rookie basketball officials or wearing out an umpire from the bleachers is not going to make them better, it will only make them quit.

That statement answers the question about why we have such a serious shortage of qualified officials in local chapters in all sports. They simply get tired of the hatred

that is spewed onto them game after game, night after night when they are only trying to do the best they can.

Officials are going to make mistakes and that will never change no matter how much you yell. Some calls will go your way, some will not, but I promise that there is no conspiracy. Officials want to make the right call just as bad as you want them to. Support the officials, and let the coaches do their job. The only thing that should be yelled from the stands is this;

Encouragement!

I will admit that I was ejected from a game or two during my coaching career at the collegiate level. Looking back, I should have just kept my mouth shut because all I really did was miss watching my team play and look silly in the process.

I could not do anything for my team while I was sitting on the bus watching from across the parking lot. Plus, I was no longer able to control my players if something got out of hand.

It is doubtful I would have kept my job if we had a bench clearing brawl while I was sitting on the bus after being ejected.

I eventually learned that the best type of coach maintains their composure, and their tongue, when things do not go to their liking.

I GREW UP!

Don't From Kids to Parents

1. Don't yell out instructions at me.

During the game, I am trying to concentrate on what the coach says and working on what I have been practicing. It is easier for me to do my best if you save instructions and reminders for another time.

2. Don't put down the officials.

This embarrasses me and I sometimes wonder whether the official is going to be tougher on me because my parents' yell.

3. Don't yell at me in public.

It will just make things worse because I will be upset, embarrassed, or worried that you are going to yell at me the next time I do something “wrong.”

4. Don't yell at the coach.

When you yell at the coach, it puts pressure on me because I know you are angry. I believe my coach really does care about me and wants the best for me.

5. Don't put down my teammates.

Don't make put-down remarks about any of my teammates who make mistakes. It takes away from our team spirit, plus I make mistakes too, and you wouldn't want other parents yelling at me.

6. Don't put down the other team.

When you do this, you are not giving us a very good example of sportsmanship, so we get mixed messages about being “good sports.”

7. Don't lose your cool.

I love to see you excited about the game, but there is no reason to get so upset that you lose your temper! It is our game, and all the attention is supposed to be on us. And, never come onto the field unless a coach asks you too.

8. Don't lecture me about mistakes after the game.

Those rides home in the car after the game are not a suitable time for lectures about how I messed up – I already feel bad. We can talk later, but please stay calm, and do not forget to mention things I did well during the game!

9. Don't forget how to laugh and have fun.

Sometimes it is hard for me to relax and have fun during the game when I look over and see you so tense and worried.

10. Don't forget that it's just a game!

Odds are I am not going to make a career out of playing sports. I know I may get upset if we lose, but I also know that I am usually feeling better after we go get a coke. I need to be reminded sometimes that it is just a game.

- *Ukn.*

Following is a copy of a template I have saved on my computer ready to go. All I have to do is type in the name, date, and site. A District Police Office hand delivers the letter to the individual to ensure it is received.

Dear (Spectator's name),

The School District has established high levels of acceptable expectations for the behavior of students, staff, and spectators during all athletic events. Your recent conduct during an athletic event between (School A) and (School B) on (date) has required us to take measures to prevent similar behavior in the future.

*Consider this an Official Letter of Notice that you have been **SUSPENDED** from attending athletic contest(s) or event(s) on (Date) due to your inappropriate behavior on (EVENT/SITE/DATE). If for some reason you fail to adhere to this notice, you may be charged with **CRIMINAL TRESPASS**. Failing to adhere to this notice may also include permanent dismissal from attending any athletic contest or event, home or away, for the remainder of the school year(s).*

Please find enclosed a copy of Behavior Expectations of Spectators from the Parent Information Manual. Please review these expectations and ensure that you abide by them at future athletic events. Your adherence to these expectations is critical in maintaining an environment where the spirit of good sportsmanship and teamwork will thrive.

Please note that if/when you are allowed to return, a second such incident will immediately result in indefinite suspension from attending any athletic contest and events for a designated period of time. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and adherence on this matter, and please direct any

*questions regarding this communication to my office
at (***) ***-****.*

Sincerely,

Sr. Executive Director of Athletics

*Cc: Superintendent
Campus Principal
Campus Police*

In all my years, and the many behavior letters I have sent, not one person felt good about how they behaved.

Let the coach handle the officials. They have received training on how to interact with game officials.

Don't yell at your kid; don't yell at someone else's kid; don't yell at your coach; don't yell at the other team's coach; don't yell at the officials; don't yell at each other; don't forget, it is just a game; don't get a letter like this delivered to you by the police.

You may not realize this, but a school can prevent you from attending any athletic contest for as long as they wish if you demonstrate poor behavior. There is nothing wrong with cheering loudly and making noise, the problem occurs when it becomes personal toward a coach, player, or game official. Get loud, just do not get personal.

When I was coaching baseball, I had a veteran umpire tell me this;

*“If I blow a call, you can yell at me, ‘**THAT call was terrible!**’ and I’ll listen to your gripe. But if you yell at me, ‘**YOU are terrible!**’ you just got personal and I’m tossing you out of the game before the next word leaves your mouth.”*

Following is from a High School Student/Parent Athletic Handbook (*spahb*) on Spectator Behavior

SPECTATOR BEHAVIOR

- *Spectators removed from an athletic event or have exhibited inappropriate conduct will receive a minimum one game suspension. The Athletic Department has the authority to extend the*

suspension beyond one game, including permanent dismissal.

- *A spectator who assaults a sports official, physically or verbally, will be suspended from attending any athletic event for a minimum of two years.*

(spahb)

I experienced a situation several years ago where an exceptionally large and intimidating man was yelling profanities at the game officials during a junior high basketball game. The young lady coaching was in her first year of coaching and knew that the parent was out of line and needed to be dealt with. The game officials called time-out and asked this young lady to remove the parent, if not, they were going to walk off the floor and call in a “no contest.”

So, here is this 5’2, 115lb brand new coach having to approach this 6’3, 245lb belligerent man and tell him to leave the gym. To her credit, she did it, but not without the parent trying to intimidate her and refusing to leave initially. Fortunately, an officer showed up with a gun and taser on his hip to assist.

After I had learned about the incident, I called the coach to check on her. She told me it was extremely

intimidating and uncomfortable for her to have to interact with a crazed parent and felt physically threatened by his size and demeanor.

In an attempt to avoid such confrontations, I devised an “**Ejection Card**” system where the coach or administrator can quietly walk up to the individual of concern and simply hand them a card as a warning.

Following are samples of the cards. The **WARNING** card is yellow and given to spectators that are directing negative comments towards officials, players, or coaches.

WARNING!

This card has been given to you as a **WARNING** that your behavior may not be appropriate for this educational setting. Attending an athletic event is a privilege, not a right, and you are expected to conduct yourself in a positive and encouraging manner. Abusive behavior towards players, coaches, officials and/or fans will not be tolerated. If your negative behavior continues, you will be asked to leave. Please conduct yourself with **CHARACTER and CLASS**.

If the behavior continues after the yellow card is given, then the **ATTENTION** card that is red in color is given to the spectator. If an officer is available, we would ask the officer to hand the **ATTENTION** card to the spectator and escort them out. This is an excellent system that allows the coach and/or administrator to control fan behavior and avoid getting into a verbal altercation with an upset spectator.

ATTENTION!

The administration in charge of this event requests that you **LEAVE THIS PROPERTY IMMEDIATELY.** Failure to comply with this request will result in contact of law enforcement authorities. **Your name has been noted and your privileges to attend this athletic event have been revoked. In order to attend upcoming events, you must first contact the Athletic Office at *** -***-**** to receive approval.**

I would ask my coaches to share this process with their parents in their pre-season meetings. I would also be sure a stack of Ejection Cards was in plain sight, either on the scorer's table or the tickets seller table so

spectators would see them as they entered. A few of our administrators would walk around the gym holding them in their hand for the world to see. They worked like kryptonite on poor spectator behavior.

Parents and spectators should be aware that the school can (and should) remove them from the premises and can prohibit them from attending future contests due to undesirable behaviors.

THREE CLOSING POINTS FOR THING THREE

1. Screaming at game officials IS NOT part of the game.
2. Let the coach handle the officials.
3. Don't say or do something in the bleachers that will prevent you from watching your child play in the future. Being escorted out of a gym by a police officer is not a good look for anyone.

**Yelling at officials is not
about kids, it is about an
angry adult acting like a kid.**

About The Author



Cash & Todd Allen Howey

ATHLETICS

Played baseball/football, Spring Woods High School,
Houston, Tx. Class 1982

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Other books written by Todd Howey:

Winning Created

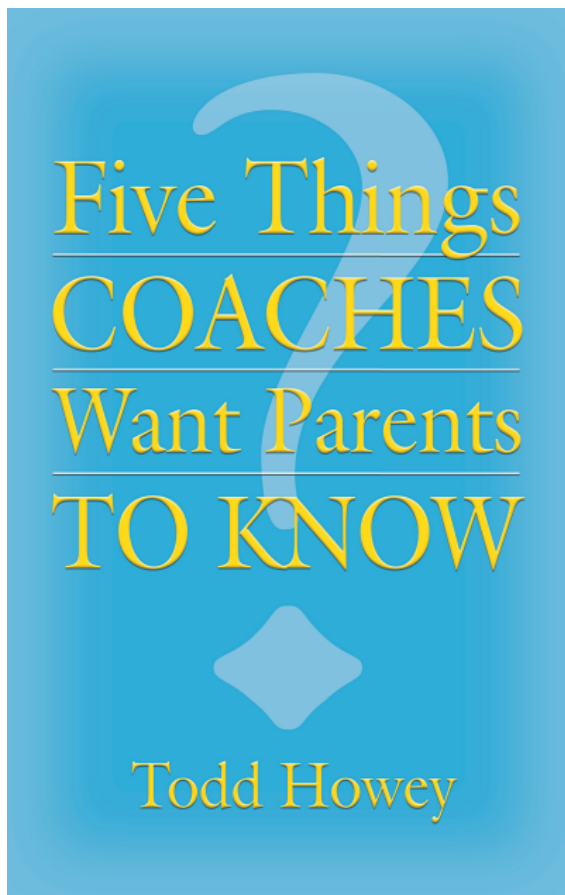
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