



With the Spring season fast approaching I am sure that thoughts are turning to training session car pools, the green grass of Saturday matches, and the emotions involved with upcoming tournaments. Regrettably, the start of a new season also brings the return of sideline fights between parents, ref abuse, and an overwhelming pressure on our soccer-playing children. This email is intended to help all across our state get on the same page, and to ensure awareness to new IYSA policies for the upcoming season.

First, I would like to encourage every parent to read [this article on appropriate sideline behavior](#). I have asked hundreds of adults why they encourage their children to participate in youth sports. The answers are all generally the same: "Because sport provides both challenges and opportunities that can help our children build strong character, learn how to do hard things, become good teammates and good opponents, good losers and good winners."

And yet we as parents often forget this as soon as the whistle blows and our focus shifts from "participation will help my child develop," to "I want my child to win."

We can change the sometimes toxic sideline culture of youth soccer if each of us will remember that for better or worse, everything we say or do teaches a lesson to our players on what behavior is appropriate and what is not. Below are a few examples of things parents do that can be detrimental to their players.

**Parent action:** giving constant feedback and instruction to players during the game, as well as before and after.

**What players learn:** my parents don't trust my coaches and me to know the right things to do; all the time I spend practicing and learning do not matter.

**Parent action:** yelling at referees, players, or coaches for making a mistake, or speaking about referees, coaches, and other players negatively because of mistakes.

**What players learn:** this is how my parent feels about me when I make a mistake, and it's ok to treat others this way when their mistakes negatively impact me.

**Parent action:** making loud, negative comments about a referee.

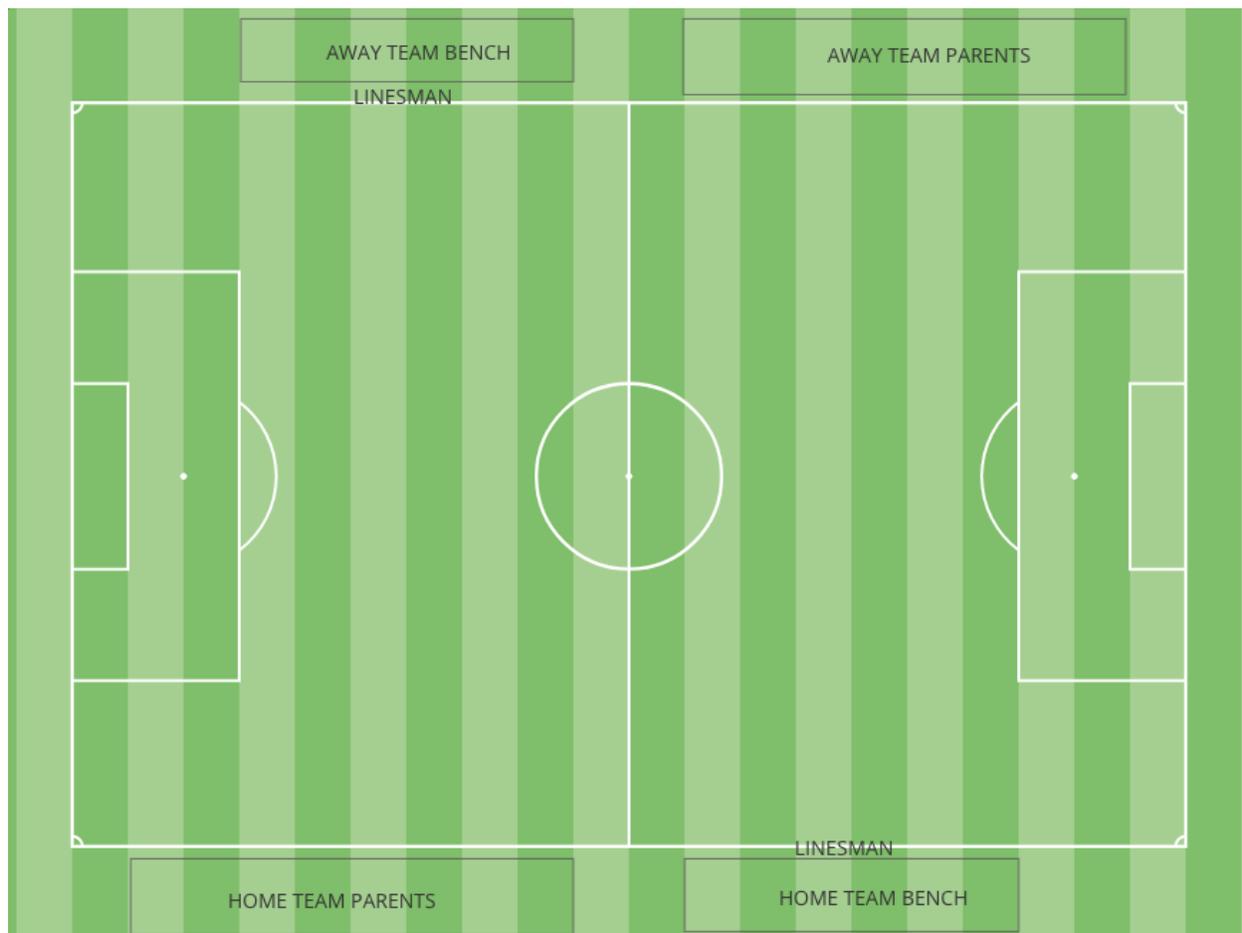
**What players learn:** passive-aggressive behavior or even direct negative taunting is ok -- even by an adult to a child -- if I think the person has made a mistake, if it gives me a competitive advantage, or if it motivates my team.

There are dozens more.

We have all been frustrated at an opposing fan for constantly complaining to the refs, or making negative comments about your players/team, and we have all likely had the thought to respond verbally or even physically, and I'm thankful that 99% of the time restraint is shown.

However, because parents don't have a technical area, parents can get right into each other's faces.

To this end, as of the Spring 2019 season all IYSA leagues and tournaments (except State Cup which is under a different jurisdiction) will have the team benches and technical area placed on opposite sides of the field and diagonal from the opponent. The AR (linesman) will run the line directly in front of the team bench. Fans for each team will sit on the same side of the field as their team bench, but on the other half. Each head coach will be responsible for the behavior of their sideline, including the bench area and the parents.



Lastly, coaches also have the opportunity to see and hear the parents, and parents can see and hear the coaches. I hope both work to encourage appropriate and respectful behavior from the other. Coaches can know who is out of line, and who is a positive addition to the environment. If referees find that spectators are negatively affecting the game, the referee should speak to the coach who should then ensure the issue is resolved.

While I'm sure that this change may cause frustration, dread, and even anger, I challenge you to find the positive opportunities rather than fighting the change. I am certainly here as a resource should you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

See you on the field,

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Idaho Youth Soccer