

# SOCCER JR. PARENTS' SITUATION QUIZ

1. You're on your way to the game, and your child is quiet. You suspect he is worrying that he will once again play only a few minutes. You say:

- A. Don't worry about playing time. If Coach doesn't start you this time, I'm going to do something about it! It's completely unfair, and I won't stand for it.
- B. This should be a pretty close game, huh? Good luck - and remember, when you get in, be sure to work as hard as you can!
- C. So do you think Bobby will start instead of you? I don't know why the coach does that - you've got a much stronger foot. Have you been doing your best in practice?

2. As you drive into the parking lot, the other team is warming up. Your child notices that the kids on that team seem much bigger than the ones on her team - especially compared to her. You comment:

- A. Oh my God, will you look at the size of those girls? I'm sure they're too old. Is there any way we can check?
- B. Good luck, dear - and whatever you do, don't get hurt!
- C. How did the coach say to play against bigger opponents?

3. It's a tight game, and your child's team just surrendered a goal. In fact, it came when your son's poor pass got picked off by an opponent; two passes later, it led to a breakaway by an unmarked player. You yell:

- A. Come on, guys, let's pass to people on our own team!
- B. Whose man was that? We've gotta start marking better!
- C. Hey ref, what about offside?

4. Another tight game, with the ball banging around in your daughter's defensive end. It's way too close for comfort, so you say:

- A. Keep working hard, girls!
- B. Boot it out of there!
- C. AAAAAAYYYYYYYYY!!!!

5. Now it's halftime and the players are milling around, drinking water and relaxing. The coach hasn't started talking yet, so you seize the opportunity to give some quick advice to your twins. You say:

- A. Robert, you have to play tighter on number 12. And Andrew, start moving up more. You'll never score if you keep hanging back at midfield!
- B. Good work, guys - don't worry, the goals will come. Now hurry up and listen to what Coach has to say.

○ C. Robert, ask the coach if you can move upfield this half - I think they need you on offense. And Andrew, whenever you get the ball, shoot!

6. As the second half begins, you're frustrated by your child's team's sluggishness. They must have eaten too many oranges at halftime! In an attempt to spur them on, you shout:

- A. Go, Cobras!
- B. Come on guys, pick up the pace! You're sleeping out there!
- C. Get to the ball!

7. Your youngster's team has finally roused itself and is attacking well. But the ball just won't get in the goal. You are beside yourself with frustration, so you scream:

- A. Pass to Caitlin!
- B. Take it yourself!
- C. Shoot! Shoot! SHOOT!!!

8. The game was a 6-0 blowout, and your son's team wasn't the one with 6. As you head to the parking lot, you turn to your child and chirp:

- A. Good game!
- B. That wasn't pretty, was it? I bet a shower would feel great right now.
- C. Here's what's I think is wrong with you guys.

9. It's near the end of a long season. One day, out of the blue, your child says, "I hate this stupid team, and I really hate my stupid coach." You respond:

- A. I know how you feel. I wouldn't blame you at all if you quit.
- B. If Brady would only stop hogging the ball, things would get better. And I definitely think we need a new coach.
- C. You must be really frustrated. It's funny, but remember how frustrated you were last year, and then you guys went to that tournament and...

10. Another match just ended - a tournament loss, on penalty kicks. Your child is sobbing because he was the one player who missed his PK. You say:

- A. Don't worry, honey. You'll make it next time.
- B. Hey, you're not the first good player who ever missed. Remember that Italian guy in the World Cup?
- C. You played a great game. It's a shame it had to come down to PKs. But you know what? The sun will come up tomorrow. I guarantee it.



## THE ANSWERS

1. B. Players should enter each game with a positive attitude. Answer A poisons your child against the coach, while C poisons your child against the coach and makes him think negatively about a teammate (and probably, a friend). Even though you might think C encourages your child to work harder, it plants seeds of discontent in his mind.

2. None of these answers is perfect, but C comes closest by allowing your child to put a positive spin on the situation. C enables your daughter to respond, "Yeah, we knew they were gonna be huge, but Coach told us just to keep the ball on the ground, and run and run until they get tired." Answer A introduces an element of poor sportsmanship that is probably unfounded, while B instills fear in your daughter. (We should note that a completely random and unscientific SOCCER JR. study has shown that, on any given day, parents on both sides think that the other team is both bigger and too old.)

3. A trick question: none of the answers is acceptable. Your son knows he made a mistake and knows everyone else knows it; there's no need to rub salt in the wound and embarrass him (A). It also does no good to point fingers at other players (B). And taking out frustration on the official (C) helps no one; it teaches youngsters to blame the ref, and may even intensify an already volatile situation. (Chances are the boy who scored was not offside - opposing teams do occasionally score legal goals.) So how should you react? Either say something positive and general, like "Heads up, guys, we'll get it back" - or nothing at all.

4. A is the correct response. You don't know whether or not the coach wants the girls to blast the ball upfield; perhaps she has been teaching her defenders to work the ball out under pressure. More and more, youth coaches strive to avoid "boomball" tactics. Even if your daughter's coach hasn't worked on this, your panicked voice does not help the team play with poise. Shout encouragement, or nothing at all.

5. This one's a no-brainer: B. Of course it's difficult for parents to resist giving advice, especially if you've coached or played before. But you have to hold your tongue; you're not the coach this time. Your advice might be right on the money for your child, but counterproductive to the team as a whole. (It might also be completely whacko.) Leave the coaching to the coach, and fulfill your role by cheering.

6. Despite your instincts, A is the best answer (assuming, of course, that the Cobras are your team, not your opponents). It is positive and encouraging. B and C are negative and

harsh. Besides, chances are the problem is not that they don't go to the ball; it may have something to do with adjusting to the wind, trying to mark a better opponent, fatigue or - dare we say it? - the inconsistencies of being a child.

7. Yep, another trick question. All of the these "helpful hints" are probably being shouted at the same time, by different parents. Yet none will work. With such cacophony, the player with the ball probably cannot hear the one person she needs to listen to: the teammate who is closest. In addition, by the time your advice reaches your daughter's ears, the situation has changed - and by the time she tries to react to what she hears, it has changed again. Your voice from the sidelines will not make your child a better player; learning to think for herself will. So what should you do when the ball won't go in? Pray - preferably silently.

8. B. The last thing your child wants to do is talk about the game - or hear your opinion of it (C). And telling him he played a good game (A) when he knows darn well that no one on his team did sends one of two messages: "My parent is an idiot" or "My parent thinks I'm an idiot." Let it go, Mom and Dad - and he will, too.

9. C is the winner. It acknowledges your child's frustration, without dwelling on it. Instead, you seize the moment to initiate a discussion about overcoming obstacles. Helping a youngster run away from a difficult situation (A) does not help him become a better player; the game of soccer, in fact, is all about solving problems. And shifting the blame to teammates or coaches (B) will not help your child in the long run.

10. Another trick question. When this happens, not even the most gifted orator can say something to make a player feel better. You can't cheer up your child any more than anyone could console Roberto Baggio - that Italian guy - in 1994. So just put your arm around your son, hug him, then shut up and drive. All the way to his favorite ice-cream shop.

### Scoring

All 10 correct: Parent of the Year

7-9: Parent of the Month

4-6: Parent Who Should Think Before Speaking

1-3: Parent Who Should Think Before Attending Games

0: OK, we'll give you a retest!