



Parents of U6 and U8 players play an active part in the enjoyment their children have in youth soccer. Encouragement to try new things is step one. Now that they are out there kicking, running, laughing, falling down and all chasing the ball simultaneously they need positive reinforcement. Many parents during matches and sometimes-even training sessions yell out to the kids what to do and when to do it. They cheer when things go right and sometimes cry out in anguish when they don't. In all they are trying to be positive and help the kids.

What many adults have forgotten from when they were 5-, 6-, 7- and 8-years-old is that children of those ages can focus on a limited number of tasks at one time. That may continue to be true to a lesser degree for older players too. Indeed it takes all of the attention capacity of an U6 player to control the ball. This is because they are still developing basic balance, coordination and agility. Also in a 4 versus 4 match the odds for the player with the ball are generally 1 versus 7.

So during a match the player needs to focus on the task at hand---trying to control the ball. Unfortunately they are distracted by all of the adults yelling from the touchline. Now they have to make a choice, either play the ball or listen to the parents.

So the lesson is clear. If parents want to help the kids play their best they need to be quiet while watching the game. Just sit back and let the children play!

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