



**MONTH OF FEBRUARY
CALLING ALL PARENTS**

from

VARA Youth Coordinator, Alex Krebs

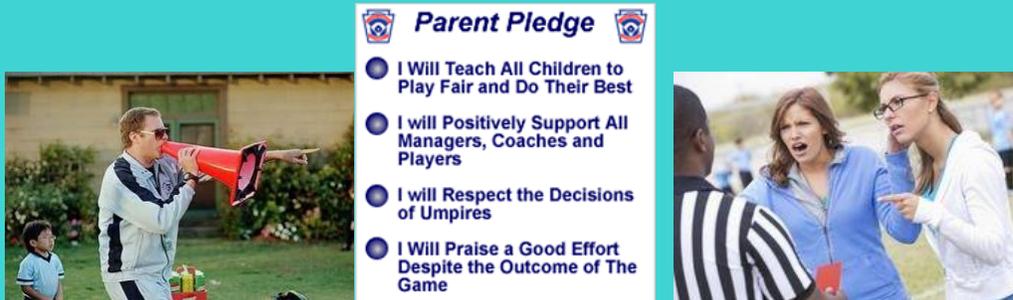


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January has come and gone and we are one month into VARA Racing for 2019. Council racing, ages U14 and under is in full swing. Council racing is an age group where parent involvement is very active and necessary. All the more reason to know great sport parent etiquette. Alex's email below gives some important reminders to help keep ski racing fun for your young children.

Julie Woodworth - VARA Executive Director

CALLING ALL PARENTS!



This article is not for the "perfect" parent. If you are one of those you can disregard and perhaps pass it along to a parent you know that is in help of some of this advice! It is understandable that parents feel emotion for the kids and feel pride when good things happen, and experience frustration and sadness when things don't go so well. One thing that is not ok is to shame or embarrass kids that are not performing up to expectations or making mistakes.

Some parents may live vicariously through their child, they hope their child achieves a level of success they didn't reach. This creates frustration and stress for parents and kids. Instead of comparing your child's abilities to yours, support, encourage and unconditionally accept your child's level of sport success. Pushing too hard can lead to young athletes quitting the sport at an early age or a number of other issues. Ski racing is an AMAZING sport, a life long sport, we want them to love it and continue to have fun doing it for many, many years.

Tips for positive parenting

- Commit to being a positive parent and try not to allow yourself to embarrass your child because of mistakes made at the event.
- Remember, studies regularly show the #1 reason why kids play sports is to have fun - ask yourself, *have you created a sport environment that is fun for your child?*
- If you feel you are pushing too hard, your intuition is likely telling you something.

This article still not relating to you? Never embarrassed your child at a sports event with inappropriate behavior? Below is a checklist of "have you ever"? And I will note there is a difference between unintendedly embarrassing your child and embarrassing them through their purposeful behavior.

**Here is a personal example. My father, (I can tell this story because he doesn't read these blogs), came to watch me at a GS NOR-AM at Mt. Snow. At that time, they didn't have foot passenger lift tickets and the race was being held on the backside of the mountain. He was not a good skier, lived in Baltimore, MD and didn't anticipate having to ski to watch the race. He had to rent ski equipment. He probably hadn't skied in years and when he found his way to the race hill he wiped out, lost all of his equipment and took out one of the GS gates. Now that is embarrassing! But I give him credit that he went through all of that to watch his daughter ski race!

Now back to the checklist:

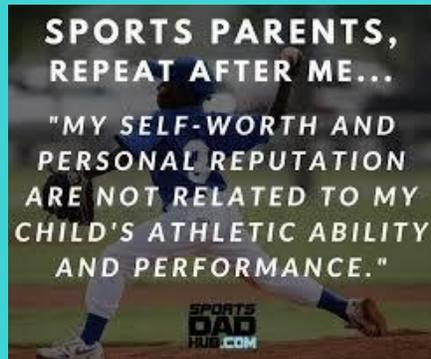
- Yelled at an official or coach when you didn't agree with them?
- Loudly booed the official or opposing team members?
- Yelled at other parents?
- Yelled at the coach?
- Been thrown out of a sports event by an official?

A few examples I can give of "inappropriate behavior". A parent pulled in to the parking lot of the ski area already late, didn't like where the parking attendant was telling them to park, let loose on the attendant, embarrassed the young kid and distracted the child from the task at hand-to get ready for a ski race. Another example: young ski racer misses a SL gate right where their parent is standing. Parent is yelling for the child to keep going, gatekeeper is telling the child they need to continue hiking. Child is confused listens to the parent and continues. Child is DQ'd for not hiking far enough, parent yells at coach and gatekeeper. Coach video later shows that indeed the gatekeeper was correct the child did not hike far enough. In this case good for the parent for apologizing to all involved and admitting they were wrong but still the child was put in the middle.

If you did or did not check any of the above boxes, we will end this article with a few *Tips for avoiding being "that" parent.*

- 1. Remember youth sports are supposed to be fun.**
- 2. Avoid altercations with the ref or other parents in the stands, on the sidelines, in the parking lot or anywhere else.**
- 3. Let the coach do their job.**
- 4. Don't analyze every practice, every game and every play with your kid.**
- 5. Encouragement is great, criticism is not.** Try "I love to watch you play", "work hard" or "have fun." A coach and mother of 4 ski racers that I really admire would say to one of her 4 kids after the first run when she didn't know what else to say "let's go get lunch"! Or ask them what their favorite part of the course was?
- 6. If your kid doesn't want to play anymore, don't make them.** Give it the one season rule. If you commit to a season, you finish the season and then move on. Kids play youth sports for FUN! Practice positive parenting, encourage vs. criticize and be role models for our young athletes.

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