

• **VIEWPOINT** •

Kids model parents behavior

By **Adrienne Downing**

Sports are big business. Gone are the days of little league games and high school rivalries being played out for bragging rights or even just for fun. Sports are now a multi-billion dollar industry, and not just at the Red Sox and Patriots levels, either. There are entire industries based exclusively on sporting goods, sports marketing, sports media and sports training.

With all of this money flying around, it is no wonder there has been a dramatic shift in the way we approach sports. The intensity level is changing, and unfortunately most of the change is not for the better, and a lot of the bad stuff filters down to the kids.

I have been a sports journalist for 15 years, and in that time the average Major League Baseball salary has increased from \$1.4 million a year to \$2.9 million, a jump of over 127 percent. That is not even the most staggering number. The average NBA salary is up to \$5.2 million from \$1.1 million in 1992, a whopping 372-percent increase.

Don't get me wrong, I like sports—a lot. My whole family participates in them and I am not even opposed to people getting paid to play them for our enjoyment. The problem is that with the amounts of money involved in sports today, it makes people do some pretty awful stuff.

I have been around the sports industry, from the major leagues to little league and everything in between, long enough to see just about everything imaginable. I have seen people do heroic things you would not have thought humanly possible and things that would be illegal to write about in a newspaper. There isn't much that surprises me.

When I was growing up, industrious parents wanted their kids to be doctors and lawyers. Now they want the next Kobe Bryant or Alex Rodriguez, and some are spending an extraordinary amount of time, energy and money to make sure that happens.

Therein lies the problem. Parents and coaches want a return on their investment, and when they don't feel like they are getting it or even sometimes when they do but they want more, they can resort to bad behavior. Only that behavior isn't happening in a black hole, it is out there for the whole world to see—including the kids. And kids will follow in the footsteps we thought we covered up.

Not all bad sportsmanship is caused by parent imitation, sometimes it comes from competitive kids being such an integral part of the team that coaches are unwilling to bench them for fear the team might lose, thus they are filled with such a sense of entitlement that woe to the person who tries to reign them in.

This season alone, I have witnessed kids swearing at coaches, referees, parents and each other. In one case, a player repeatedly threw dirt in a goalie's face when his shots were blocked, and then the parent could not understand why the offender deserved to be penalized. I have heard coaches encourage players to hurt opposing players, and a referee laugh when that happened. Coaches and kids alike have had temper tantrums on the field when a call doesn't go their way. Several times kids have thrown whatever is within immediate reach on the

field, at a coach or even at their own teammates to express their displeasure. Parents have screamed at officials, kids—their own and others, and at other parents.

On the other hand, this year, among the majority of Jamestowners, I have witnessed parents and players express genuine concern when someone is injured no matter what team they are on. They have cheered whether the score is in their favor or not. They have praised a good play, regardless of which team made it and have cheered and played on even when the calls are

against them and the opposing team has shown no decorum.

For this, I offer my applause to the Jamestown parents, coaches and players. They have stood out like a diamond in a coal mine this year. Even when the odds were against them, the teams showed amazing sportsmanship and poise. Although, I am sure the temptation to argue a call came more than once, they played on and never gave up.

I hope they will continue to set the standard for better behavior in sports and be rewarded accordingly down the road.

JSA announces kickoff for spring soccer

The Jamestown Soccer Association announces its fall tryout session to kick off the 2008 Spring Competitive Youth Soccer Program.

This session will be held this Saturday, Oct. 27, from 12:30 to 2 p.m. at the Lawn Avenue soccer fields. (Rain date is Sunday, Oct. 28 at the same time.) All Jamestown soccer players ages 6–17 are encouraged to attend (birthdays before August 1, 2001). Players should wear shins guards, soccer cleats and bring a ball.

The spring competitive season is the hallmark of youth soccer on

the island. The program's primary goal is to foster enjoyment of the game of soccer, while developing individual and team skills and elevating the overall quality of play.

Teams are entered in skill-appropriate divisions in the RI Super Liga, a statewide competitive league of over 500 teams. The season begins in early April and runs through mid-June. Training begins with weekly indoor skill development sessions in February, and games are played on either Saturday or Sunday. Teams play four home games at our Jamestown

fields, and four away games in neighboring communities. Some teams may elect to enter weekend tournaments in the region. Given the program's schedule, commitments to other communities, as well as its focus on developing team play, spring soccer requires attendance at all practices and games.

JSA had a highly successful 2007 spring season, fielding ten teams with over 125 players.

Contact Vincent Kirby, 423-2342, or Paul DeMieri, 423-2035, with any questions.



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