Parent Challenges

1) ***"No Phone Zone"*** at camp, game, practice or event unless you are taking photos/videos of your child.
    a. Today's children have grown up with people focusing on their screens and not focusing on each other.
    b. Connect with your child by being in the moment at their game, practice or event. Putting your phone down bestows value on someone else. It shows your child they are the most important thing at that moment and you are there to enjoy watching them play.
    c. These youth sports moments won't last forever.
    d. Give it a try. Your parent experience will be a much better one; much deeper experience. It will be worth the effort and your children will appreciate it.

2) Be vulnerable enough to live by the ***ELM Tree of Mastery*** as a parent as well **(See the ELM Tree of Mastery discussion).**

3) ***Understanding your Role at Every Game*** (Four Main Roles)
    a. **Coach**-If you are coach, you coach the team.
    b. **Player**-If you are a player, you play the game.
    c. **Official**-If you are an official, you officiate the game.
    d. **Spectator**-If you are a spectator, you watch the game.

As a spectator-

-Your coaching and playing experience is irrelevant. You are still a spectator if you were good enough to play college sports 20 years ago.
-You're still a spectator if your child's coach doesn't have the same level of coaching experience that you do.
-You're still a spectator if you've "been around the game and know what you are talking about".
-**Bottom line**-if you're not the team's coach during the game, you have no right to coach from the sidelines.

What does sideline spectator coaching do to the 4 roles in every game?

Player--

1. It confuses the players with conflicting instructions
2. It steals the player's decision-making opportunities-huge part of the development of a child. It goes back to the ELM Tree of Mastery discussed. (Effort, Learning, Mistakes)

Coach--

1. Takes authority and respect away from the coach
2. Many coaches hear sideline spectator coaching and as a result, the coach may have a different perception of your child resulting in an impact on playing time/treatment.

Referees--

1. Makes the referees worse:
    a. Officiating will deteriorate when being yelled at.
    b. Often times, the yelling at officials takes place because so much emphasis is placed on the outcome of the game. When the focus is on the process and not the outcome, the vitriol for officials is drastically reduced. After all, it is just a game.
2. Blaming others for the results of a play or outcome of a game.
    a. You're teaching your child to make excuses (passing the blame)
    b. ELM Tree of Mastery-What does the M stand for? We all make mistakes; officials included.
3. Without referees/officials we don't have youth sports. We need referees for our games at all levels and all sports for your kids to play. Don't drive referees out of the game by your actions.

Spectators—

1. Creates an uncomfortability with those in the stands who are there to watch the game and their children. Consider those around you who are simply there to watch the game. Are they enjoying the experience? Can they enjoy the experience with your actions?
2. You are representing your name, your child's name and the school/team your child plays for. What reputation do you want you leave for your child to deal with? I'd argue that's not fair for your child.

What should parents do as a spectator?

1. It's very simple.
2. Watch the game and encourage the players. It means enjoying the game, "loving the moment to watch your child play" and clapping and cheering for the team.
3. Support new coaches—just like you would support new players. Good coaches are always learning, just like kids are. Many times people step up to do the job because no one else will do it. All to provide an opportunity for the kids. Everyone has to start somewhere.
4. As soon as you stand out from the crowd, more times than not, you are doing something wrong.

In conclusion:

When spectators are yelling from the sidelines, they're making the sporting experience for all involved less enjoyable. Understand your role as a spectator because your kids aren't going to be playing youth sports forever. Sit back, enjoy the game, love to watch your child perform and let the coaches do the coaching!

4) **Transform your parenting during youth sports**
   a. Utilize something from this document and use it to better the youth sporting experience for all. It's takes intentional effort to make change. Please consider trying something from above to make a habit.

5) **Mobilize the messages** you believe are the most important or easiest to implement:
   a. Share the ideas and suggestions above with other youth sports parents. We can all do our part in making the youth sports experience a better one for all involved.