

Positive Sideline Behaviour –
Are you positively contributing to your child's rugby experience?

Have a read of our FAQs, http://www.irishrugby.ie/downloads/Frequently_Asked_Questions.pdf, to inform yourself of what is expected of the club, the player and their parent. When you are sure all safeguards are in place then you can be confident that your child is playing in a safe and fun environment. This will assist your child to compete at a level that matches their age and stage of development. It is important that they do this so that they may develop their skills over a period of time, IRFU support a Long-Term-Player-Development model for all players. It is important that as a parent you too support this model of development so that your child doesn't feel under pressure to perform.

Parent's sideline behaviour is important to the positive development of Age-Grade rugby. The 'issue' of pushy parents can be seen in all sport but it is not consistent with the values of IRFU. Respect is essential to the game and in order for your child to live this value they must learn it from adults. If Age-Grade players only experience pressure to achieve they are likely to become anxious about their performance in games and less likely to develop to their full potential. You can positively contribute to their development by following the guidelines below:

- Ensure they know it's their right to participate in rugby as it is their right to choose not to continue in rugby, without feeling guilty that they've let you down. You will be there for them irrespective of their choice.
- Focus on what is going well for your child in coaching or matches, not just results. Avoid using result orientated questions such as did you win or what was the score, instead focus on their performance, how was your kicking, did you work hard throughout the game?
- They will be well aware if they've 'had a bad game' and will benefit more from you assisting them in learning from their mistakes rather than criticizing them, especially in front of other players.
- Try not to show your disappointment when things go wrong and encourage them to focus on what they can do to make it better in the next game rather than looking for someone to blame, "the referee should not have given that penalty" or the "coach should not have played such as player"
- Keep your child's rugby in balance with other activities that they are doing; not every player will make the Irish team and they'll need your assistance in managing expectations.
- Keep their development in perspective, don't compare their performance to their peers, focus on their own skills and goals appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Ensure their rugby experience builds self-confidence and independence and does not focus on meeting your expectations or the coach's expectations of winning
- Encourage your child to review their own performance and training, and not to rely solely on the direction of adults. Encourage them to seek assistance in making necessary adjustments (to diet, gym routine, etc.) with support of coach, physio, etc.

- Ensure they work hard to achieve their goals rather than looking for short cuts to success, especially those that could lead to cheating (violation of anti-doping rules) or injury or burn-out.

Take note of how you behave around your child with regards to their rugby:

- Do you plan the season for them, organising their gym sessions or prioritise their rugby above other activities without consulting with them?
- Do you put this player and their rugby ahead of other activities within the family?
- Do you make decisions about their rugby without appropriate knowledge of the Age-Grade pathway or without consulting with their coaches, managers, etc.
- Do you use their rugby performance to motivate them to achieve in other areas?

If so, you may be over emphasizing your child's rugby rather than seeing rugby as a tool by which they develop their sporting abilities; remember they are a person first and not just a rugby robot.

Reflect on your child's rugby:

- Why are they playing and what is it that they want from the game - are their needs the same as yours?
- Are your demands appropriate to their age and stage of development? It is important to discuss this with other trained specialists as over training can lead to injury and burn-out.

Your child's individual maturity (both physically and emotionally) will impact on what they can do and it's important that they are allowed to develop at their own pace. Setting goals relevant to their development will mean Age-Grade rugby becomes a developmental set of challenges to learn from rather than using results as predictors of future success.

Even when you are vigilant and the club operates to a high standard situations can arise that cause concern. Should this be the case, follow the safeguarding policy to ensure issues are dealt with appropriately,

<http://www.irishrugby.ie/playingthegame/development/safeguarding/concerns.php>)

If you play your part in overseeing your child's rugby journey it is likely that they will remain involved in the game over many years.

If they have your support Age-Grade Players are likely to be self-confident enough to raise any issues that they have with you or the club.