

# The Consequences of Negative Parents

Written by Lester Pasarell

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## What to do about M's father?

[By Donna Olmstead, Soccer America](#) The recent death of Salt Lake City, Utah, soccer referee [Ricardo Portillo](#) makes me incredibly sad. There isn't a game on earth that is worth someone's life. I read that his family says the parents of the 17-year-old keeper who hit him in the head should bear some of the blame. I guarantee you that neither the parents nor anyone else on the sidelines intended for Portillo's death to happen. But time and time again I've watched negative energy result in unintended consequences.

We were at a U9 rec league soccer game Saturday. These kids are at the age where some of them are beginning to show a real talent for soccer and the rest of them are just having a good time running around in the sun.

One little girl, we'll call her M, should be on a competitive team. She has two older brothers who practice soccer with her, and the lessons show in the way she moves, handles the ball and watches the players around her. She's the team's top scorer, of course. And she's a nice kid.

The coach is great with the players. He plays them evenly throughout the game and encourages them with positive comments. He's not the type of coach who keeps his strong players on the whole game with the object of winning. I wish we could clone him.

And I wish we could banish M's father to the parking lot. Actually, to a parking lot in another county. Or state.

When a player whom M's father considers to be weak is playing defense, he snorts and makes comments such as, "Well, now they'll score for sure."

When a player besides his daughter has the ball, he yells that they should pass it to her.

And, with M's father on the sideline, who needs a coach? He knows everything about soccer and "coaches" at the top of his lungs.

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Besides not having a volume control, one of the problems with M's father is that he really doesn't know everything about soccer. For example, when the keeper picked up the ball outside the box, M's father yelled, "Penalty kick!" Of course it was just a hand ball, but he really didn't want to hear that.

I'm not sure how to handle parents like him. Sitting at the other end of the field helps me a little, but it doesn't do anything for the parents around him whose feelings he's hurting. He simply goes into his own world when the game begins and becomes unconscious of everyone else.

Because at this age the kids still are shorter than the parents, they get to run through a "parent tunnel" at the end of the game. And they love it. It doesn't matter who won or lost, they run through smiling while the parents yell encouragement. Then everyone gets a treat.

We tied this game 4-4. When M's mom told her husband it was time to form the tunnel, he looked at her and said, "They don't deserve a tunnel. They didn't win." And he picked up his chair and walked off the field. I hope M didn't notice that he wasn't there.

I don't know how to handle M's father. Actually, I know I can't handle him. And I'm pretty sure he doesn't realize that the negative energy he is sending to the players and to the players' parents will have unintended consequences. At the very least, he's ruining the game for the people close enough to hear him. Let's just hope that's as far as it goes.

*(Florida resident Donna Olmstead has been involved in soccer through both her children and her grandchildren, as well as housing professional players and owning and running an indoor soccer facility. She is a freelance writer and spends weekends trying to remember at which tournament she's supposed to be cheering.)* For more information, check out some of US Youth Soccer's parenting resources:

[Education](#)

[Parenting](#)

[Responsible Sports Parenting](#)

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