

Parents were once children.

By: John Morrison

One of the hardest things in life is to have a child involved in sport.

Encouragement and stimulation are two vital ingredients needed by children in their development.

But many parents in finding them easy to give to her children, find these necessities hard to find when dealing with their own child.

When a son or daughter is an elite sports person, the job of directing them can be a most difficult task.

I often wonder what it was like for Brian Clough and Alex Ferguson in managing their sons Nigel and Darren.

Think of the relationship between the tennis superstars Serena and Venus and their manager, their father.

Closer to home it must be difficult, past and present, for Mick O'Dwyer, Eamon Coleman, Mickey Harte, Mickey Moran and Joe Kernan to have to deal day and daily with sons Karl, Gary, Mark, Conleth, Aaron and Stephen in their respective teams.

One of the most influential sources of a child's psychological and sociological development is his or her parents.

A coach may interact with a young up to five hours a week but this is paltry when compared with the time a parent spends with their child.

It is primarily in the home that the child's beliefs, values, perceptions, attitudes and goals are shaped.

Research has shown that the interest and support of parents is vital to a young player's continued participation in sport.

But also shown is that much of the pressure and anxiety that young players feel in sport can come from parents.

So, why do parents become so animated and involved in their child's sport?

Parents often have a strong desire to make things right; this 'righting reflex' has a tendency to make parents over zealous in their attitude towards their child.

This well intentioned desire can lead to conflict instead of support; telling a child what he/she should or should not have done, rather than respecting the child and believing that the child has the answer, and encouraging them.

Some parents may perceive that their child's competence is their competence.

They may wish to live or relive their sporting experience or career through their child and assume that their child has to do as they did.

A child's participation in sport can offer parents the opportunity to rewind their own sport experience and make up for their own perceived failures and missed opportunities.

Be careful, parents!

Excellence is all about attitude. Attitude is all about environment, (or the way we grow up).

Parents influence the environment most