

Bad Behavior Is Underrated In Junior Tennis

How many times have we all observed a player getting upset, mad, angry and pissed? I say quite a few times, and that definitely include my children. I will provide the definition for each of these words. Upset is defined as thrown into a state of disarray or confusion. Mad is defined as affected with madness or insanity; marked by uncontrolled excitement or emotion; very foolish. Anger is defined as great confusion, belligerence aroused by a real or supposed wrong. Pissed is defined as aroused to impatience or anger. I have seen my daughters take their racquet and slam it against the heel of their tennis shoe. What if they missed the heel of their tennis shoe and hit their ankle? Was the few seconds of rage over a missed point worth six to twelve months or more recuperation for a shattered ankle? How often have you observed a junior player screaming at their opponent? The angry opponent has now informed her adversary, you now have my permission to kick my posterior because my anger has placed me in a state of insanity; perhaps confused sounds a great deal better than insane. When the junior tennis player acts this way, does the parent immediately confront him or her? Is it better in the eyes of the parent to just stand their blind to this horrible behavior or as a parent do we react not condoning this negative behavior? Would

you report your child to the referee if you saw her cheat or make a bad call? Would you sit or stand by and do nothing? If your child threw their racquet in anger or broke the racquet, would you react by telling him, he has to retire immediately because his behavior is unacceptable? If you saw your daughter call a ball out, and you could clearly see the ball was in, would you make her correct the call? Or would you ignore the call and hope she can still pull off a win? Is the win more important than sportsmanship? Is the win more important than doing the right thing? We don't want to kill the spirit, but how do you channel this energy for a positive outcome? I think the junior player has to realize there are consequences for his/her actions. If there aren't any, what is the incentive to change? What messages are we sending to our children? Is it okay to act like a nut, as long as you win the match? You can rest assured, this behavior will not improve over time, and it will become far worse as he/she gets older. The parent dictates the tone of acceptance for this behavior. We teach them young to realize they will have losses, and in order to become better at anything you will experience defeats. However, there are lessons to be learned from a loss. It's by far easier to be a gracious winner than a gracious loser. That's why I admire Nadal so much, he's gracious when he wins or loses. Losses make it clear what part of your game needs work, whether it's mental or physical. That is part of the learning process. Development should always be the focus. If

you win by cheating, screaming and hollering, throwing your racquet, calling your opponent names, there's no reason to change in the child's mind if the parent congratulate him/her on their victory. I can only teach by example. By doing nothing and saying nothing I am in essence condoning this bad behavior. Bad behavior is definitely underrated in junior tennis and that's a shame.

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