

October 18, 2006

My son plays a lot of soccer and he even went to Scotland about a year and a half ago with the Maryland State Youth Soccer Associations Olympic Development Program (ODP) soccer team. In Scotland the Maryland ODP all-star team play youth farm teams associated with Scottish pro soccer teams, including those of the two most famous Scottish soccer teams, Celtic and Rangers.

One of the most interesting things about the trip was the behavior of the parents and fans of these very high level and serious Scottish youth teams. All the kids playing on these teams are essentially trying out for the Scottish pro ranks. Yet, during the games the fans didn't say a word except to applaud and cheer a particularly good play, e.g., a goal, shot on goal or a good save. And, when the American parents would yell some sort of instruction to their kids on the field, or make some other comment to the ref or the players, the Scots would turn around and look at us as if we were way out of line.

The protocol in youth soccer in Scotland is that the fans essentially stay out of the game entirely. Of course, at the pro ranks in Scotland, the fans are as vocal and as involved in the game as any fans in the world. But the behavior protocol at youth games in Scotland is far differently.

This was a great thing to experience, and it seems unfortunate that many of our fans' perspectives on appropriate behavior at youth sports contests here in the US seems is far less civilized.

Regards,  
Dan