

BJORN BORG'S ADVICE TO PARENTS: "STOP BOTHERING THE KIDS"

Translated By Torbjorn Karlsen

Borg's advice can apply to skiing as well. In the February issue of the Norwegian Coaches Club monthly newsletter I came across an interesting article from the Swedish newspaper Ekspressen. The former tennis super star Bjorn Borg was giving his views on parents, kids and sport. Although Bjorn's comments on the negative influence parents can have on sport may not apply to a vast majority of parents within cross-country skiing, I felt that his comments would be valuable for parents with kids participating in cross-country skiing as well.



"Shut Up!" is what Bjorn Borg often has thought about yelling to the many moms and dads he sees in hockey arenas, soccer fields and at the tennis courts. It was Bjorn's first-ever public comments on kids and parents. His message is that children and kids should be able to do sport with a smile and be prevented from being yelled at and bothered.

My mom and dad were always by my side when I grew up. They never demanded anything. They never yelled or tried to explain what was right or wrong. I decided on my own what I was going to do and how. My mom and dad were there. Period. That's the way it should be. I tried numerous sports: soccer, basketball, table tennis and hockey.

Later, when I was eight, I got going with tennis. But I tried everything. I was curious, but I repeat that it was pure coincidence that I chose tennis.

The biggest danger for today's kids and youth sport is moms and dads. I have personally seen and heard dads that have yelled at eight-year-old hockey boys. I have seen eight year olds crying and kids that are ashamed over their parents behavior at the stadium or on the field. You find parents like that all over. "Shut up, stop bothering your kids!" Many times I have wanted to yell my anger at parents who don't know a single thing about sport.

I'm so tired of seeing parent treat their sport-kids badly.

Youth sport is serious, but everything should be done with a smile and a shrug at a young age. The coaches and team leaders should protect the kids when they are doing sport. Mom and dad should be there, but they shouldn't be seen or heard. Mom and Dad should be supportive.

I have followed the debate about the health of today's youth. I'm shocked that they don't have mandatory physical education in school anymore. The self-discipline is weak among today's kids. There are very few that exercise on their own. It's too hard! After school you'll find the kids play video games, watch TV and be on their computer. And that is after stuffing themselves with a few burgers so they have energy for the computer.

Elite sport is one thing, but exercise is something totally different. A lot is gained if you start in school. To do well is always a good start.

Facts: Bjorn Borg was last year selected Sweden's greatest sportsperson of all times. Bjorn is now 46 years old and left the master tennis circuit last year. He is the only tennis player to have won five straight single Wimbledon titles. He is now interested in managing the Swedish youth tennis team. He will never leave the sport of tennis.

Torbjorn Karlsen is one of the top nordic coaches in the U.S. (including coaching Justin Wadsworth, Beckie Scott, Nancy Fiddler, and more), a very fast Master Skier, co-owner of torbjornsport.com, and produces a website about nordic skiing: fasterskier.com.