

# Nit-picking parents 'putting kids off sport'

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Dr Sam Elliott found well meaning parents were putting their children under too much pressure.

Flinders University research has found that many parents are unwittingly driving their children to quit sport because of intense, post-match grillings.

Dr Sam Elliott, who is a lecturer in Sport, Health and Physical Activity, and a member of the SHAPE Research Centre, at Flinders, found that some nit-picking parents who trotted out statistics on their children's

performance were actually doing more harm than good.

Such parents, who often believed they were providing 'constructive criticism', were in fact destroying their children's confidence and love of sport, according to Dr Elliott.

Dr Elliott's research featured heavily in TV and print media last week, including a report on Channel 10 News.

"Parents tend to believe that they're being positive and passionate, and that this will benefit their [children](#), but the truth is that the research shows it's sometimes not the case," he said.

Dr Elliot interviewed more than 100 parents and junior Australian Rules football players, aged from 12 to 13 years old, from clubs across the state for the study, which will be published in Sport, Education and Society.

"These kinds of debrief can play a positive part in your child's participation in sport but when [parents](#) cross the line and, sometimes unwittingly, begin criticising their kids, a lot of damage can be done," said Dr Elliott.

The Flinders researcher's work is part of a number of research projects at Flinders, which through its SHAPE Research Centre, seeks to help a range of South Australian sporting clubs and organisations improve their outcomes.

The SHAPE centre, which consists of a dedicated team of researchers with a unique focus on sport, [health](#) and physical education, also works to help care providers confront emerging health concerns such as obesity, physical inactivity and poor dietary practice.

It also looks at challenges facing individual and community health in contemporary Western society influenced by social determinants such as age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and socio-economic status.

Provided by Flinders University

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