

First, let's define sportsmanship. It is defined as "conduct-- as fairness, respect for one's opponent, and graciousness in winning or losing-- becoming to one participating in a sport."

"Conduct" refers to respect, integrity, honesty, fairness, and leadership.

Sportsmanship is about personal responsibility. It's about self-evaluation. Making choices upon thought, not impulse. Doing so will contribute to a positive environment for ALL involved.

We all know "The Golden Rule" – Treat others as you would like to be treated. Simple, to the point, and it promotes an enjoyable environment for everyone.

It is the expectation for interscholastic events, and no matter if you are a student, coach, official, administrator or fan, it starts with you! Treat others as you would like to be treated so that we have positive and educational opportunities within interscholastic programs and beyond.

Examples of Good and Bad Sportsmanship

- **Examples of GOOD sportsmanship include:**

- Fans cheering for **BOTH** teams during a contest
- Welcoming opponents and fans to events with banners or signage
- Students helping opponents up off the floor/field
- Officials explaining difficult calls to students and coaches
- Coaches rotating 2nd and 3rd string students into a contest at the right time

Examples of BAD sportsmanship include:

- Booing an opposing team or being disrespectful in ANY way
- "Trash talking" with your opponent
- Anyone other than the coach or official "coaching" or "officiating"

- Running up scores in one-sided games
- Fighting or verbally threatening any participant or attendee

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Let's now discuss why sportsmanship and appropriate behavior is so important. Knowing that sportsmanship is about personal responsibility and control, we encourage you to behave in ways that result in a positive environment.

Cheer, support your team, maintain your composure, accept what you cannot change about the contest rules, calls by officials, and the outcomes of games and events. Enjoy the overall experience of interscholastic programs.

Remind yourself that you cannot control outcomes, but you can control how you react to them.

We have some work to do. Across all sports and activities, there is an officials shortage and this limits the opportunities for students to participate within interscholastic activities.

A 2021 survey of state high school associations indicated about 50,000 officials have left the profession since the 2018-19 school year.

Unfortunately, there have been numerous situations highlighted on the news and social media where officials have been physically and/or verbally assaulted while officiating. This has no place within interscholastic programs.

In 2022, the NFHS held an Officials Consortium and it was identified that the boorish behavior of fans – and others – as the most common and visible issue affecting the recruitment and retention of officials. Behaviors can be changed, but it will take efforts from everyone to turn in a more positive direction.

A behavior that should be avoided is fans yelling at officials or coaches during a game. It negatively impacts what is going on and can be a huge distraction.

Too many parents get carried away at things like questioning calls during a game, and it can lead to negativity. The focus should be on the kids out there participating.

It is extremely important to set a good example for the students, so things like yelling at officials or inappropriate behavior should be avoided.

"Showboating" is a prime example of bad sportsmanship. I think being excited over a big play, or celebrating with your teammates is one thing, but to go out of your way to excessively celebrate is another.

Aggressive behavior from parents, fans, coaches, and players needs to be avoided, as it makes it difficult to properly officiate the game. Above all, it actively hurts the experience for players.

Making a Positive Impact

- No matter our role, ***others are watching***. Your behavior has an impact on others. **Be the example** that others can follow to create an enjoyable experience for everyone, especially the participating students.

How you behave as a student, coach, official, administrator, fan, or parent, will be seen and heard by others. Be the influence that creates a **positive experience, NOT negativity**.

Administrators have a large role in promoting good sportsmanship and appropriate behavior. Behavior expectations must be set and violators of that behavior must carry consequences. Rewarding and/or highlighting positive behavior is a good way to promote the behavior you want at your events.

Remember, what you permit at your events is what you promote at your events. Negative and disrespectful behavior has no place within interscholastic programs, or any programs for that matter. Make sure you are promoting a positive, educational environment that is appropriate for interscholastic programs.

The role of fans and parents during interscholastic events is to support their respective students and team throughout the contest.

It is important that fans and parents avoid negative cheering tactics, commenting on officiating or coaching, or interfering with students. Let the

officials manage game issues, and the coach manage team and student issues. You, as a fan and parent, need to manage ONLY your OWN behavior.

Contests and/or games are emotional and those emotions need to be managed. Be sure to cheer for your team and/or your son/daughter/neighbor/school. Don't yell or cause embarrassment to your kids or school. Be a good example.

As a student, it is your role to compete with integrity and vigor, and to support your teammates. It is NOT your responsibility to officiate or coach. It is also important to respect your opponent and the officials. Understand that without the officials, there could not be a contest.

Be sure to represent your school and community to the best of your ability. You also can help set the standard for your fans in the stands and help create a positive environment that everyone can enjoy.

Coaches, be mindful that you are a teacher first. Focus on the fundamentals of the game you are coaching and positively model your behavior for your students.

Do NOT try to control the calls in the game or argue them. By arguing official's calls, you teach everyone around you that the outcome of the game is more important than teaching the players self-control and perseverance.

Officials, it is your job is to enforce the rules of the contest, impartially and to the best of your ability. Do NOT aim to become the center of attention. Instead, seek to teach students the rules of the game. Display pride in officiating and professionalism at all times and be mindful of body language.

Communicate with coaches, students, and administrators to the best of your ability. It is not your role to control the fans in the stands.

Communicate with the school administrator or coach if there is a fan causing an issue that impacts the contest.

Sticking to Our Roles

- If we stick to our roles and get comfortable with them, we **avoid trying to play anyone else's role** and improve and focus on our ability to manage our behavior. **Behavior is contagious. Be the positive influence, no matter your role.** We all need to do our part in creating a positive and educational environment.

As a student, it is important to serve as role models for our teammates, as well as our parents. Every team member must buy into the concept of good sportsmanship to be credible.

It is important to remember that interscholastic athletics are learning experiences for students and that sometimes, mistakes are made.

As a coach, we set the tone for a game. If a coach yells at and disrespects the officials, the fans and players may follow suit. The coach needs to be a POSITIVE example.

As an administrator, it is important to set the expectation with the coach and participants and hold them accountable. Also act if the expectation is not adhered to.

As an official, one aspect of the game that can promote good sportsmanship between opposing teams is getting together with the team captains beforehand. During this time, an official can explain the

importance of sportsmanship during the game, as well as then having the team captains shake hands before going to their respective benches or sidelines.

Be positive and cheer for your team only. Do not address the other team unless it is to applaud good effort or a good play.

Treat each other with grace and respect and know that your point of view may not always be the same as others and may not always win out.

Sportsmanship is the most important aspect of education-based athletics. It promotes fair play, respect, and the importance of following the rules. Everyone must buy into it and support one another in promoting it.

A good, systematic sportsmanship program must be implemented to ensure a positive and inclusive climate. It is our responsibility to make sure coaches, students, and fans follow the program within our schools.

An example of good sportsmanship is communicating clearly and effectively with everyone involved during a game. Everyone being respectful towards one another is key, thus allowing officials to manage the game properly.