



# Why Sportsmanship Matters

# Sportsmanship: It's Part of the Educational Process



The Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association comprises more than 500 member high schools who recognize that athletic competition expands the learning experience beyond the classroom.

Unlike professional sports, top division college sports, and even club sports, high school sports are **education-based**. They are meant to teach students not only athletic skills and the rules of play, but also the values of sportsmanship, hard work, teamwork, discipline, problem-solving, leadership, judgement, perseverance, respectfulness and more.

Many of us learned much about life from high school sports, and we owe our young people a sports environment that's just as safe and supportive as our classrooms. High school sports present an extraordinary opportunity for all of us in education to help students learn both as participants and as spectators, and to prepare for what lies beyond high school.

We know that people have different opinions about what sportsmanship is, and that the difference between supporting one's own team and trying one's best to rattle the opposing team is a fine — and sometimes creative — line, indeed. We do not intend to limit free speech or dampen enthusiasm at athletic events, but we do believe a common definition and uniform set of expectations — adopted by a committee of member schools for our member schools — can be helpful in providing a positive educational experience and in making good choices for respecting the other team. High schools sports are most beneficial and enjoyed when all involved are demonstrating respect for others in a fun and safe environment.

By joining the WIAA, school administrators accept responsibility for embracing the ideals of education-based athletics and the responsibility for educating their coaches, student-athletes, parents and fans about the rules of fair play and proper conduct during competitions as stated in the Bylaws and Rules of Eligibility.

## Definition of Sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship is viewed by the WIAA in conjunction with the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) as a commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities that are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. The ideals of sportsmanship apply equally to all activity disciplines. Individuals, regardless of their role in activities, are expected to be aware of their influence on the behavior of others and model good sportsmanship.

Providing leadership and guidance for conveying the ideals and fundamentals of sportsmanship to our youth is an important responsibility for all those connected directly or indirectly in their school sports communities.

We take that responsibility very seriously — and we know you do, too.

During most school years, the WIAA and its member schools organize, stage and officiate — without major incidents — approximately 119,000 varsity level contests, 3,300 regional and state tournament contests and an unknown number of subvarsity games. As members of the WIAA, we share a collective responsibility to preserve high school sports on the moral, ethical and educational platforms on which they began. Please join us in teaching our young people the values of sportsmanship. Help us help our student athletes “play” their way to future success...on and off the field.

Respectfully,

**The WIAA Sportsmanship Committee**

# Why Sportsmanship Matters...

## To Students

Students who learn to appreciate the true meaning of sportsmanship can transfer that knowledge and experience to other facets of their lives, whether it is in building and maintaining relationships, being productive and happy in the workplace, or respecting differences in one's community, state and country.

## To Fans

When unchecked, jeers or unsporting behaviors embarrass individuals or schools, or may initiate a counter response, which then may escalate to more disrespectful and offensive responses in return. These types of scenarios in an emotion-filled environment have potential to extend outside the venue and to other interactions or future events with adverse, even violent, results.

## To Coaches

Coaches are the teachers in the athletic classroom and can experience the rewards of seeing their student athletes embrace sportsmanship. In addition, other coaches and officials will be eager to schedule games with you when your teams demonstrate sportsmanship.

## To Schools

With budget restraints and referendums for renovations, repairs, expansions and even programming, it's imperative that school systems maintain strong community support. Sustaining a positive and safe venue for high school sports by ensuring that athletes and fans demonstrate sportsmanship helps you build admiration and goodwill within your community.

## To Communities

The only impressions visitors may have of a community may be those formed when they travel to venues and events where school sports and other activities take place. When athletes and fans display sportsmanship at school-based activities, it creates a positive perception of one's community — and can impact family and employee decisions on where to live and enroll their children.

Visit [www.wiaawi.org](http://www.wiaawi.org) to learn more about sportsmanship.



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