

Thoughts on Sportsmanship From Ken Guy, Youth Soccer Coach

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We all know good sportsmanship when we see it. We also know poor sportsmanship when we see it. That is because sportsmanship is all about observable actions and behaviors.

Good sportsmanship is not something we should just talk about. It requires action and practice. Any player or coach can say they are a good sport, but we really don't know until we see their behavior on the field. The famous football coach Knute Rockne was fond of saying: "One person practicing good sportsmanship is far better than 50 others preaching it."

Sportsmanship boils down to showing **consistent actions of respect** at all times. As a soccer coach for the past ten years, my teams have a single rule spelled R-E-S-P-E-C-T. This rule applies to players, parents and coaches. Everything we do is centered around respectful behavior.

Following is checklist on how players, coaches and parents can demonstrate respect:

- Players:
 - Acknowledge the effort of your opponent (don't degrade your opponent)
 - Listen to your coach and respect his/her decisions
 - Keep in mind the welfare of your teammates (Michael Phelps example)
 - Watch your temper (don't retaliate)
 - Watch your language (don't cuss)
 - Play fair (avoid dangerous play)
 - Be easy on the referee (don't argue calls)
 - End the game smoothly
- Coaches:
 - Respect the game and abide by its rules
 - Be easy on the referee (avoid arguments)
 - Reinforce sportsmanship (don't just focus on outcome of game)
 - End the game smoothly
- Parents:
 - Cheer the players but avoid coaching from the sidelines
 - Be easy on the referee (avoid arguments)
 - Reinforce sportsmanship (don't just focus on outcome of game)
 - End the game smoothly

Sportsmanship is earned, not given, over the course of a season. I am proud that District IV feels sportsmanship is important enough to measure it, to hold teams accountable for the results, and to reward it in the form of the annual Tom Higby Sportsmanship Award.

I think it's important to find out about your sportsmanship score this past season. You can easily look it up on the District IV web site. I encourage coaches to discuss these sportsmanship scores with their players and parents and set goals for next season.