



# OSAA Equity and Diversity Newsletter

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## OSAA Resources Available

The focus of this month's newsletter is event management and preparation. Please review the articles available as well as the resources below to help your school and community prepare for upcoming events. These resources and more can be found [here](#) on the OSAA website under S.T.A.R. Resources and Event Toolkits.

### **Event Staff Preparation**

Premeeting with event staff regarding event details and possible needs

- » [S.T.A.R. Sportsmanship Expectations](#)
- » [ODE: Guidance on Discriminatory Harassment and Bullying in Student Activities and Athletics](#)
- » [Positive Coaching Alliance: Intervening on the Sidelines](#)
- » [Positive Coaching Alliance: How to Intervene When People Dishonor the Game](#)
- » [Coaches Code of Ethics](#)
- » [Supervision Guidelines](#)

### **Free NFHS Courses and Articles**

#### **Courses:**

- » [Sportsmanship](#)
- » [Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention](#)
- » [Bullying, Hazing and Inappropriate Behaviors](#)
- » [Positive Coaching Alliance: Culture Keeper in English](#)
- » [Positive Coaching Alliance: Culture Keeper in Spanish](#)
- » [Positive Coaching Alliance: Empowering Conversations in English](#)
- » [Positive Coaching Alliance: Empowering Conversations in Spanish](#)
- » [Positive Coaching Alliance: Healthy Fuel Handout in English](#)
- » [Positive Coaching Alliance: Healthy Fuel Handout in Spanish](#)
- » [Positive Coaching Alliance: Game Day Tips in Spanish](#)

#### **Articles:**

- » [Changing School Culture Requires Intentional Focus](#)
- » [Our Schools, Ballfields, and Gyms must remain free of Hate and Bigotry](#)
- » [NFHS: There is No Constitutional Right to be a Bully](#)
- » [NFHS: Explaining Education Based Athletics to Parents](#)
- » [Dear Colleague Letter: October 26, 2010 Office of Civil Rights](#)
- » [Oregon Anti-Bullying Laws and Policies](#)



## We Are What We Repeatedly Say: Poor Spectator Behavior In Sports

By: Jack Bowen, July 8, 2019

**Sports fans and parents of youth sports athletes consistently confound viewers for their astonishingly poor behavior. Just the recent sports news cycle highlights some real lowlights.**

The NBA Finals featured adults shoving and taunting the athletes, fighting police on the court, and throngs of people cheering frantically and applauding as Kevin Durant crumpled to the ground, writhing in pain from the tearing of his Achilles Tendon for which he'd later need surgery—literally, a man stood courtside waving gleefully at Durant on the floor in pain. Most recently, video captured a brawl which broke out in a suburb of Colorado over the calls of an umpire—a 13-year-old—at a 7-year-old Little League Game.

This has all left people wondering how it's come to this. Why would otherwise well-meaning adults behave so poorly? Some pundits point to the increased stakes of youth sports, while others to specialization which has become more rampant. But this isn't a new problem. We can go back to the infamous 2011 beating at Dodger stadium of a San Francisco Giants fan by two Dodgers fans which left the man brain damaged and permanently disabled for the remainder of his life. And instances like this abound.

It turns out, along with all of the great aspects unique to sports, there is one thing sports culture has allowed—or, more strongly, encouraged—which leads to humans thinking it's okay to treat others so poorly. Even in the most refined, educational settings, once players and coaches and referees step on the court, they have somehow separated themselves from the remainder of civil society: we can berate, taunt, jeer, humiliate, all under the banner of some relativistic, vacuous axiom, "It's just part of the game."

**Language matters.** How we speak to each other translates to how we view each other and then, quite directly, how we treat each other. Military leaders know this well: if you dehumanize the enemy it's much easier to kill them. Many of us won't find ourselves in such a drastic situation as war, but it's clear language still impacts our views of others in ways we know now better than ever. We have seen this more recently in the way we have changed how we speak about once-marginalized groups, especially in the context of sports. And now, we can see it in the language used to address athletes, coaches and referees on the field.

Until very recently, it was not uncommon for athletes and even coaches and educators to employ racial, gender, and homophobic epithets in reaction to a poor play by an athlete. Things have changed for the better here. My first year coaching at my current high school 20 years ago, a very conscientious, educated Assistant Coach told a player, following a weak shot, that he shoots "like a girl." In my subtly correcting him, he utilized a second tool from the similar holster claiming what I'd just said seemed "kind of gay." He was raised on that particular sort of language in the sports culture and, as such, to him this language seemed okay, in the context of sports at least.

Thankfully, this language is now frowned upon throughout much of the sports culture, even doing away with the demeaning language of the disabled and other marginalized groups. Not surprisingly, all of these once-marginalized groups have seen a huge improvement in the way they are viewed and, more importantly, treated in society.

Aligned with this, we can better understand another shortcoming of the language we now use—fans, coaches, and athletes—as we step into the sporting arena. Doing so will help us to better frame and understand—and, again, move away from—some of the ludicrous behavior seen on such a consistent basis.

Looking at the language so common in the sports culture, it's not difficult to detect an us-them mentality. From this point, the "them" becomes "other" and, as we've learned about the human condition, it's easy to harm someone if you've diminished their personhood. In this mindset it's much easier to taunt, humiliate, and physically harm someone if you've turned them into something not worthy of moral consideration.

Here are a few general areas where the sports culture has encouraged this, making it so ubiquitous it has become almost invisible to those entrenched in it:

**-Mocking Referees:** One needs to attend just a single game, at any level, to realize mocking referees truly is “part of the culture.” Notice, here, the use of the word “culture” and not “game.” Mocking a referee is not “part of the game” in any way—the athletes and coaches competing and the referee attempting to adjudicate what, exactly, has transpired is all part of the game. But it’s become accepted to name-call, berate, challenge, and taunt the referee, throughout the entire game, kids and adults alike. Multiple websites even expound on the best/favorite ways to insult a referee and parents and fans almost see it as their “right” to engage in such otherwise morally lacking behavior.

**-Mocking Athletes:** Nearly as ubiquitous as the referee-taunt is the athlete-heckle. And no athlete is exempt, even at the high school and interscholastic level. One favorite taunt is the “Air ball!” phenomenon. Entire groups of children and faculty band together to taunt the children from opposing teams when they fail, all in an attempt to humiliate the child, in hopes of their performing more poorly. Every sport has their own way of humiliating their opponents, all under the vacuous banner of it being “part of the game.” As comedian Jerry Seinfeld once observed, how odd it would be to go to an adult’s workplace and taunt them for their mistakes—and, yet, we’ve made it commonplace at the games children play.

**-Language of Competitors:** Coaches, and especially youth coaches, are not exempt. On the one hand, coaches can choose the language they use to teach, by either demonizing a marginalized group or, what proves to be more effective, by educating the actual athlete. But it goes beyond that. Coaches have the opportunity to frame the athletes’ conception of their competitors. Many coaches dehumanize the opponent, urging athletes to crush, destroy, and annihilate the children on the opposing team. Given the power position of a coach and the fact that the coach commands such admiration given their connection with the child’s sport of choice, these words, over time, leave a real impact.

Knowing the effects language has on human behavior, it shouldn’t be so surprising to see how the common language of sports has manifested in the behavior of fans and parents of athletes. The deeply-rooted emotional aspect of sports only exacerbates the issue, often hijacking any semblance of reason, rationality, and human decency.

The good news is, we can make a change: at the least, in youth sports and interscholastic leagues where rules can be implemented and actually mean something. In doing so, we can re-humanize athletes and referees, making competition more of what the word’s roots stem from: to strive together. The next generation of sports parents and fans striving together will take time, but given the current state of affairs, certainly seems worth it.



# Encouraging Good Sport Conduct In Athletes

By: Jennifer J. Waldron, Ph.D. School of Health, Physical Education, and Leisure Services  
University Of Northern Iowa

Parents often enroll their child in a sport program to build the child's character. Sport participation by itself, however, does not develop character in athletes. Just like any physical skill, athletes need to be taught positive behaviors. Coaches play a vital role in developing positive attitudes and behaviors in their athletes. Two major ways that coaches can develop good sport conduct is via positive role modeling and actively teaching good sport conduct.

What is Good Sport Conduct?

Good sport conduct or sportpersonship is the behaviors appropriate of a sport participant. Sportpersonship occurs when athletes show respect and concern to opponents, teammates, coaches, and officials. In other words, coaches should teach their athletes to "treat others, as you would like to be treated." Sportpersonship is an important issue facing all people involved in athletics. Episodes of coaches, parents, and athletes behaving poorly at sporting events are often reported in newspapers and on television.

*Examples of good sport conduct include:*

- shaking hands with opponents after a game
- helping an opponent up after a play
- showing concern for injured opponents
- accepting all decisions of the referees
- encouraging less skilled teammates
- congratulating an excellent effort by opponents

*Examples of poor sport conduct include:*

- trash talking
- causing injury to an opponent on purpose
- cheating
- making fun of teammates' effort, skill, race/ethnicity, or size
- blaming losses on others

running up the score against your opponents

Model Good Sport Conduct

There are many ways that you can teach sportpersonship to your players, but the most important way is for you to model good sport conduct.

*Knute Rockne, former football coach of Notre Dame, said "One man practicing good sportsmanship is far better than 50 others preaching it."*

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Young players look to their coaches as role models and are likely to observe their coaches' behaviors. It is unlikely that athletes will be able to control their behaviors, if their coaches are unable to control their own behavior. Coaches who show respect to officials and opponents before, during, and after games can truly expect their players to do the same.

#### ***Examples of showing respect to officials***

- avoid calling the officials names
- civilly question calls
- be open to idea that the official is correct
- put yourself in the official's shoes

#### ***Examples of showing respect to opponents***

- give your best coaching effort
- celebrate victory respectfully
- engage in the pre- and post-game handshake
- give credit to opponents

During practices and games, it is imperative that coaches remain under control during interactions with players, assistant coaches, officials, and opposing coaches. Parents observing the good sportpersonship attitude of their children's coach will soon understand the responsibility they have to engage in good sport conduct as spectators.

#### **Actively Teach Sportpersonship**

- Set up rules of sportpersonship or a code of conduct at the beginning of the season. Make sure to include consequences for breaking the code. These rules and consequences must apply to all athletes in all situations.
- Expect sportpersonship during practice and competitions
- Bring examples of the good or poor behavior of professional or college athletes to practice. Discuss the behavior of these athletes with your team.
- Encourage athletes to reflect on their behaviors by asking them questions. One discussion format that could be used is as follows.
  1. identify the problem
  2. identify negative and positive actions
  3. identify how each action influences people involved
  4. choose best action
- Reward athletes on your team who behave as good sports. Discipline athletes who behave as poor sports. By allowing poor sport conduct to happen on your team, you are teaching athletes that poor sport conduct is acceptable.
- Teach athletes to be considerate of their teammates and their opponents when they win and lose.
- Emphasize respecting opponents and officials whether they win or lose.
- Stress the importance of sportpersonship at parent meetings.
- Make sure your athletes know and follow the rules of the sport.

Article Available [Here](#)

