

Sportsmanship

Everyone involved in sports seems to talk about sportsmanship and how important it is in youth sports. But what is sportsmanship?

Webster's Dictionary describes sportsmanship as the qualities and behaviors of athletes who treat their opponents with fairness and who can take a defeat without complaining and takes a victory without gloating. This description should apply not just to opponents, but also to teammates.

As an athlete and a member of a team you should expect to be treated fairly by your coaches and your teammates and should treat them fairly too. We must remember that everyone has different backgrounds and experience in sports. You may have played the particular sport for a couple of years but you probably have teammates who are new to the sport. In order for your team to be successful you should encourage these newer or less skilled athletes so they can improve themselves and help the team. Making fun of them or giving them a hard time when they make mistakes is poor sportsmanship. Remember that you were just like them not too long ago. How did you feel when one of your teammates made fun of you? Probably not very good. Good teams are teams where everyone works together to help each other. Cooperation within a team is very important.

This same attitude should apply to your opponents too. All too often we watch professional athletes and think that the way they behave during games is the right way to act. Unfortunately, that is not always true. You should really think about what you do and say during a game. You should let your skills do the talking. Trash talking has become very common in sports. Many people feel that it is just a part of sports, but other people feel that it doesn't belong in sports at all! What do you think?

This article provided by Dr. Richard Stratton, Health and Physical Education Program, Virginia Tech

Note from the Optimist Club of Stanley Park: "Trash talking" is NOT part of our game and will NOT be tolerated. Play the game and treat others as you'd like to be treated.