

## SPIRIT GROUPS

These groups are also visible representatives of their schools. As such, high expectations are placed on them for appropriate behavior. Cheerleaders, bands, and other spirit groups are admitted to contests at the pleasure of our institutions to support their teams and assist in creating a positive atmosphere. They are not admitted in order to disrupt or confront the opponent; such behavior must not be tolerated. Their focus must be toward encouragement of their own team while at the same time demonstrating respect for the opposing team.

## OFFICIALS

Officials who are assigned MIAA contests must enforce the rules regarding sportsmanship without tolerance for abuse. The only warning to participants and coaches regarding sportsmanship should come at the beginning of the contest. Once the contest begins penalties (consequences), not warnings, must be assessed for unsportsmanlike conduct. Similar to the baseball policy of ejecting coaches for arguing balls and strikes, the MIAA expects that Officials will eject any coach who protests unsportsmanlike conduct calls provided by the rules of that sport.

*Each Official at an MIAA sponsored event will be provided with a card with the following statement, which must be read, to the Captains and Coaches of every contest prior to the beginning of the contest:*

*"The MIAA requires Officials to enforce all Rules regarding unsportsmanlike conduct by coaches and student-athletes. There will be no tolerance for negative statements or actions between opposing players, especially trash-talking, taunting, or baiting of opponents. If such comments are heard, a penalty will be assessed immediately. We have been instructed not to issue warnings during the contest. It is strongly suggested that you remind your participants of this policy."*

## MIAA SUPPORT

The MIAA will firmly support the enforcement of unsportsmanlike conduct rules at all MIAA sanctioned events. *Furthermore, the MIAA may assess penalties for improper behavior which is not detected or properly addressed during the contest.* Member schools and their personnel are expected to fully cooperate with the MIAA's effort to investigate inappropriate behavior.

In the unfortunate event that an altercation occurs during a contest, all individuals who are on the bench are expected to remain there. It is incumbent upon the Head Coach to ensure that this occurs. The MIAA may suspend the Head Coach of a team whose bench personnel enter the playing area during an altercation, regardless of whether those individuals become involved in the altercation.

## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The MIAA believes that the efforts to meet the expectations outlined in the Statement will encourage and promote the high ideals of sportsmanship at all levels of play. In so doing, the MIAA seeks to create a positive atmosphere for athletic competition at interscholastic events throughout the Commonwealth.

It is clear that policy without positive programming will **fail**. *MIAA constituents are encouraged to compliment this sportsmanship initiative with preseason meetings, Coaches' workshops, and Captains/Leadership Workshops.*



revised 8/13/14

# MIAA Guide to the Purpose, Philosophy, and Application of the TAUNTING POLICY



# MIAA TAUNTING POLICY

1. Taunting includes any actions or comments by coaches, players, or spectators which are intended to bait, anger, embarrass, ridicule or demean others, whether or not the deeds or words are vulgar or racist. Included is conduct that berates, needles, intimidates or threatens based on race, gender, ethnic origin or background, and conduct that attacks religious beliefs, size, economic status, speech, family, special needs or personal matters.

Examples of taunting include but are not limited to: "trash talk", defined as verbal communication of a personal nature directed by a competitor to an opponent by ridiculing his/her skills, efforts, sexual orientation, or lack of success, which is likely to provoke an altercation or physical response; and physical intimidation outside the spirit of the game, including "in the face" confrontation by one player to another and standing over/straddling a tackled or fallen player.

2. In all sports, officials are to consider taunting a flagrant unsportsmanlike foul that disqualifies the offending bench personnel or contestant from that contest/day of competition. In addition, the offender shall be subject to existing MIAA Expulsion Rules. **A warning shall be given to both teams by game officials prior to the contest.**
3. At all MIAA contest sites and tournament venues, appropriate management may give spectators one warning for taunting. Thereafter, spectators who taunt players, coaches, game officials, or other spectators are subject to ejection.

**Comment:** All MIAA endorsed rule books give officials/umpires/judges authority to penalize what is generally considered taunting. The purpose of the MIAA's action is to be more specific in the definition, more emphatic on the penalty of disqualification, and more uniform on the application of the definition and enforcement from sport to sport.

*Adopted by the Board of Directors on November 17, 1994*

## PURPOSE

The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) is committed to encouraging and promoting the high ideals of sportsmanship, integrity and ethics at all levels of interscholastic competition. MIAA also is committed to developing a positive environment for athletic events throughout the Commonwealth.

A major part of the role of education through sports is to teach our student-athletes to conduct themselves with sportsmanship and respect – respect for the game itself, respect for teammates, coaches, officials, and respect for opponents.

In an effort to achieve this goal of establishing a healthy and positive environment for athletic competition, the MIAA has generated this Policy Statement which outlines its expectations of the various groups and individuals associated with interscholastic athletic programs in Massachusetts.

## SCHOOL AND ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATORS

It is incumbent upon High School Administrators to do everything in their power to create a positive environment for interscholastic events. They must adopt the attitude that the treatment of visiting teams and spectators will be in the same manner that they would want their own teams and spectators treated.

Athletic Directors must ensure that those representing the host school treat opponents with fairness and respect. This includes student-athletes, cheerleaders, bands, and public address announcers.

School Administrators and Athletic Directors should review periodically with all groups involved precisely what constitutes acceptable conduct, as set forth in this Statement.'

## COACHES

Coaches have the greatest influence over whether student-athletes are taught to recognize and follow the principals of sportsmanship, integrity and ethics.

Good coaches have risked losing by removing from a contest, a student-athlete who has demonstrated disrespect for his or her opponent. This disciplinary measure teaches the importance of sportsmanship over participation or winning in athletic events. While everyone wants to win, *winning at the expense of good sportsmanship is not acceptable.*

This type of attitude and courage must be adopted by all coaches throughout the MIAA, and staunchly supported by administrators. Administrators and coaches must pay special attention to the behavior of their student-athletes and continually *emphasize the need for sportsmanship and respect.*

Such attention and education is needed to counteract the constant messages received by our young people from many professional athletes and others who demonstrate a total lack of respect for others. The MIAA is committed to sending a strong message to our student-athletes which encourages sportsmanship and good ethics.

Coaches also have the ability to influence the behavior of their fans. MIAA coaches must take every opportunity when addressing the media, parents, and fans to express their desire for fans to support their own teams, but not to abuse visiting teams and their fans.

## STUDENT-ATHLETES

Respect for the sport in which the student-athlete participates also demands respect for the opponent. Student-athletes participating in MIAA sponsored events are expected to treat opponents with respect. *There can be absolutely no tolerance for trash-talking, taunting or baiting of opponents.*

MIAA student-athletes must appreciate and understand that they are perhaps the most visible representatives of their schools. In addition, their behavior is observed and emulated by many who are younger.

MIAA student-athletes must honor the responsibility which accompanies the privilege of representing their school *by behaving with dignity and class on and off the field.*