

***** FIRST PLACE *****

Dear Coach

By Casey Silver

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Dear Coach,

I had to write an essay about sportsmanship for English class. So, the first thing I did was look the word up and find that it is defined as, "conduct and attitude considered as benefiting participants in sports, especially fair play, courtesy, striving spirit, and grace in losing." As I was thinking about this definition, I realized that you push our team every day, every game, to demonstrate this. You have high expectations for our behavior and you also set an example for us to follow.

From the beginning, you told us explicitly that you expected us to compete fairly. There was to be no cheating, fighting with players on other teams, or arguing with the refs. We were to play clean and always represent our school in the highest manner possible. We heard this on the first day of practice, with implications that there would be consequences if we did not comply. We really got the idea, though, when we saw you talking with the opposing coach before every game. You were nothing but courteous to them, no matter how important the game or how that team had acted in the past. Also, you shook hands with the opposition firmly with a strong, "Good game," after every match, regardless of the outcome. Your actions showed us exactly how we were supposed to behave.

In many cases dealing with winning or losing can define a team; they can be forever known as the bad losers or the ones you celebrated in our faces. Well, Coach, I think that you have always demanded that we show ourselves in a sportsmanlike way. First of all, part of sportsmanship is the striving spirit, and all you ever ask of us is that we do our best and try our hardest to win. You instill within us a burning passion to do so, and we come out fired up with intensity in every game. When we do win, you tell us, "Congratulate the other team, because they played as hard as you did." When we lose, you tell us to hold our heads high and to be proud of our effort. We never blame the losses on anything else, like the weather or the officials, because you never do. Not a word is ever uttered about the other team. "Congratulate them," you say, "because they played a great game." We do not hang our heads, either, because you do not blame us. We just resolve to do better next time.

I want to thank you, Coach, for promoting sportsmanship on our team. You are an excellent role model, and although your expectations for us are high, they are praiseworthy, and you never allow us to stray from them. I am proud to say that I am on your team because I know that, following your lead, we will never cause another team to think poorly of us. Playing for you, I know that I strive to do my best every time because you push me to do so, although I have the power to accept a loss with a determination to play better the next game. Because of you, Coach, we do have the conduct and attitude that defines sportsmanship, and that is what makes our team really great.

Thank you,
Casey Silver