

***** FIRST PLACE *****
A Powerful Experience In Life, Sports
Gregory Baker
Minnechaug Regional High School

Athletes are trained to be the elite players of their sports. Each must play fairly, play with courtesy, play with a striving spirit, and play graciously when winning or losing. When an athlete is able to show sportsmanship, he or she becomes a leader of character. He or she then becomes a role model to his or her team, school or community. As a student ambassador of the MIAA it is my role to promote sportsmanship because it builds character useful not only on the playing field but for life endeavors. To achieve sportsmanship is essential to develop integrity, courtesy and respect. Respect is most important because athletes need to respect their coaches, teammates, officials, and most importantly the rules of their games. To this end, I will encourage sportsmanship among all athletes recognizing that as role models they must be leaders of character. It does not matter whether they are the best or the worst players, they will have the same degree of influence on others.

As an athlete I know the meaning and the importance of sportsmanship which has had a positive effect on my life by giving me qualities of character that I could not have so readily gained through any other experiences. Through participating in sports I have acquired self-confidence, determination, competitiveness, and leadership. Knowledge of my athletic abilities allows me to take on any challenge. Once athletes perfect their performances to the best of their respective potentials they are likely to transfer training discipline to other areas, namely academics and extracurricular programs. By participating in sports I have become a hard worker which has reflected positively in my academics and job. If sports were not a part of my life, I surely would not have the drive and desire to take on challenges that have come my way. Because of my experiences I want to encourage other young people who are reluctant to participate to show up at tryouts regardless of their abilities. I want athletes to make sure they extend sportsmanship at all times on and off the field. Furthermore I want students to experience the power of sportsmanship as I have.

It is crucial that every high school sports team be an archetype of sportsmanship. Teams are supposed to be competitive, but when a team does not abide by the rules it should be held accountable for unacceptable behavior. There should be no excuse for poor conduct during a game, cheating during a game, or excessive celebration after a game. In all, athletes must take on the responsibility for teaching sportsmanship to those who do not exhibit it. The most effective way for high school athletes to accomplish this teaching is through example. During both practice and play, teammates should exhort the efforts of each other, and extend such support through positive treatment of individuals throughout the academic and extracurricular day.

My role is to be an athlete who at all times plays fairly, plays with courtesy, plays with a striving spirit, and plays graciously whether winning or losing. My role will be extended by initiating words of encouragement to fellow athletes to abide by these high standards. The importance of sportsmanship in my life has been deepened by the honor of my nomination as an MIAA student ambassador.