

**SECOND PLACE**  
**The Role of the Media in Promoting Sportsmanship**

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Sportsmanship is defined as the conduct and attitude that is suitable to play sports. Players exhibit good sportsmanship through fair play, courtesy, competitive spirit, and grace in losing. Good sportsmanship makes a sport more enjoyable not only for a player but also for a spectator. Parents, guardians, and coaches strive to teach young players the importance of good sportsmanship in an effort to produce future adult athletes that will lead by example. It is the responsibility of the media to highlight athletes who display good sportsmanship and to expose those who don't and the consequences they face as a result.

Sports media play an enormous role in shaping the way young athletes respond to certain situations on the playing field. These young athletes are easily influenced by the professionals they admire. Coverage by the media pertaining to behavior of professional athletes on and off the field is extremely important. ESPN commentators, for example, discuss daily the issues in today's sports, how the athletes play and work on the field, and interview the athletes in an effort to convey to their viewers how the athletes feel in a given situation. Our young athletes will exhibit sportsmanship when the media understands the importance of their role in promoting it.

Knute Rockne, a former coach of Notre Dame Football stated, "One man practicing sportsmanship is better than a hundred teaching it." If his words are taken to heart, we could all see more acts of good sportsmanship -- a player offering a helping hand to an opponent laying on the ice, a court or field; as striker giving the opposing goalie a pat on the back for a great effort to make a save; overzealous spectators and players not harassing the officials because they made a call that disappointed them; a hockey game with no fighting; spectators of both teams offering applause for a home run, grand slam, no hitter, or any job well done. All this is possible and the media's coverage of it is crucial to promoting more of the same behavior.

Is this all idealistic? Absolutely, but if we strive for this outcome and fall short we've still made a huge impact on the role sportsmanship plays in sports. To go a step further, maybe someday we'd see a good sportsmanship award be considered equally as important as an MVP award. The only way we can make progress in promoting the importance of sportsmanship is for the media to take an active role and highlight athletes who lead by examples.