

**\*\*\*SECOND PLACE\*\*\***

**The Ultimate Fan**

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It's in the paper, screaming across headlines, "Fan Goes Overboard", "Father Arrested After Attacking Opposing Team Coach". In today's world, instances of poor sportsmanship on the part of fans are reported on a regular basis. It's an epidemic large enough to call into question the role of a fan in promoting sportsmanship in today's world.

The definition of "fan" as written in the *American Heritage Dictionary* is "an ardent devotee of a sport or athletic team." I am fortunate because the ultimate "fan" lives in my home. My baby sister, Kailyn, learned to walk the year I started high school. She has been present at almost every game I've played, home or away, for football, basketball, and lacrosse. Decked out in purple and white, there is no doubt which team Kailyn is there to support. I would like to say she is there to support only me, but that would be a lie. Before the game, she's been known to walk up to one of my coaches and wish him good luck. She knows enough to stand when the *National Anthem* is played and to put her right hand across her heart. She cheers, "Go Vineyarders!" and calls players by their name. After a game, while she waits for me with my mom or dad, she tells players, "Good game." Everyone knows my sister. At three years old, Kailyn's spirit and enthusiasm are a true example of how every fan should support their team.

Perhaps one of the best examples of Kailyn's support occurred after a football game this fall. Our team lost a game we should have won. We were on the boat coming home and I was keeping to myself outside, in the dark, on the upper deck. I was not in the mood to see anyone or talk to anyone because I felt some responsibility for our team's loss. As I sat there looking out at the water, I sensed a presence next to me. I looked over and saw my sister sitting there. She didn't say a word. She just reached out her little hand and held mine. It was almost like she was aware of my disappointment and wanted to help. After a couple of minutes of complete silence, all she said was, "Good game, Patrick." In those words, I realized that she was right. Our team made mistakes that night, but we were still a good team. She made me realize that there are more important things in this world and that, in her eyes, every game is a good game.

It has been said that a game makes the fan, but in my case, a fan makes the game. People of all ages could learn something from my baby sister when it comes to supporting their favorite team: be nice, keep words of support positive, and remember what's important in this world.