

THIRD PLACE
The Role of the Media in Promoting Sportsmanship
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The media have become an extremely alluring and motivating medium within today's modern society. We find ourselves turning to our television screens, our newspapers and our computers more frequently than ever before. Our eyes glimpse millions of convoluted images of emotion and drama, which are pressed into our psyches.

The media work hard to present many topics of interest to their anxious audience. One of the more highly acknowledged subjects is the world of sports. Sports have become an intimate part of our lives. We pursue our favorite teams with an undying vigor. Who prompted this thirst for athletic support? A reasonable answer to this question is the media.

Sometimes, however, the media do not simply bring to light the glory of the game. The images of fights, brawls, quarrels between teams and screaming parents, all congregate into the media's message. Soon, the seemingly sportsmanlike game becomes a raging battle of vicious fans and unruly teams. What kind of a message is this sending to the public and younger generations?

The violence shown on the television, in pictures, and on the computer screen becomes part of younger athlete's competitions. *Today Magazine* reported in its fall edition that, "The number of abusive, negative and violent incidents in youth sports has risen sharply in the last five years among all age groups and all sports." Sportsmanship is slowly fading into an abyss of violent behavior. The media take these fights and project them to a much larger audience.

Besides revealing these belligerent acts, the media provoke them. Newscasters put relentless stress upon teams, forcing them to work under extreme pressure. This pressure can push teams over the edge when they are challenged by opposing teams. Unable to deal with their built up tension, teams become engrossed in brutal battles, all over a simple game. The unfortunate loss of sportsmanship does not apply to professional sports alone. Likewise, sportsmanship also fades from younger participants.

Young athletes take a mighty blow when the media pushes them too far. High school sports become serious life and death pursuits of glory. Newspapers publish article promoting the victory of certain teams. If the favorite team does not win, it is made to feel like a failure by the blasting of the media. The media thrusts ideas of bitter rivalries into the minds of these young adults. Teen athletes become convinced that they need to win; they need to beat the other team down in order to have a good time. This is a terrible abomination that needs to be stopped.

Sportsmanship is a learned practice of respect for one's self and others. Instead of pressing for perfection, the media should provide strength for those who have shown support and discretion. When the love of the game, the glory of the goal, the joy of the home run and the passion of the competition are lost, then the world finds one less reason to cheer for the power of the human spirit.