



24th Annual Student Sportsmanship Essay/Multimedia Contest

**Sportsmanship Beyond the
Game: High School Athletes as
Positive Role Models.**

*A collection of finalists entries
submitted by students
from MIAA member schools.*





“Sportsmanship Beyond the Game: High School Athletes as Positive Role Models.”

This book represents the finalist entries in the 24th Annual MIAA Student Sportsmanship Essay/Multimedia Contest as voted by the MIAA Sportsmanship Committee.

Multimedia Category

First Place

Thomas Stachowicz, Thomas Waldron,
Leah Rivers-Wright, and Henry Waguespack
Maynard High School

Runner Up

Samuel Jansen and Michael Rapson
Dartmouth High School

Essay Category

First Place

Zachary Iannacone
Ayer Shirley Regional High School

Runner Up

Harris Fagan
Oakmont Regional High School

Essay First Place

Zachary Iannacone
Ayer Shirley Regional High School

Displaying good sportsmanship is crucial when interacting with younger athletes, as it sets a standard for their behavior and helps them develop a positive attitude toward competition. Good sportsmanship fosters respect, teamwork, and resilience, all of which are essential life skills.

One of the most impactful ways I demonstrate good sportsmanship is through coaching younger kids in basketball camps at my school. When I coach, I prioritize teaching the fundamentals of the game, but I also emphasize the importance of respect and teamwork. I encourage my players to support one another, whether they make a good play or miss a shot. I model this behavior by celebrating their successes and helping them learn from their mistakes without criticism. By creating a positive environment, I hope to instill a love for the game and the understanding that winning is not everything; it's about enjoying the process and growing as individuals. This approach helps the kids understand that sportsmanship is about more than just competing; it's about building character and relationships.

Another significant influence on my sportsmanship comes from watching my older cousin John, who has a deep passion for sports and has chosen to serve in the Marines. His dedication to his athletic pursuits and his commitment to his servicemen have inspired me greatly. He always emphasizes the importance of discipline, respect, and support for teammates, both in sports and in life. When I see him interact with others, whether in a competitive setting or during training, he consistently exemplifies good sportsmanship. This has motivated me to copy his behavior and pass on these values to younger athletes.

Finally, I believe that sports have the power to shape our lives in many ways. Through my own experiences in various sports, I have learned invaluable lessons about perseverance, respect, and the importance of a positive attitude. I try to impart these lessons to the younger athletes I work with. For instance, I emphasize that losses can be more educational than wins. I encourage the kids to reflect on their performance, understand what went wrong, and use those lessons to improve. I also remind them that sports are a platform for learning how to handle both victory and defeat gracefully. By sharing these experiences and insights, I hope to help them appreciate the journey of sports and the character-building opportunities it offers. In conclusion, demonstrating good sportsmanship is essential for preparing the next generation of athletes. Through coaching younger kids, being inspired by role models like my cousin, and sharing life lessons learned through sports, I strive to model respectful behavior and create a positive environment for learning and growth. By instilling these values in young athletes, we can help them become not only better competitors but also better individuals. Good sportsmanship is a lesson that extends far beyond the field.

Essay Runner Up

Harris Fagan
Oakmont Regional High School

As kids, everyone has role models; we all aspire to be something. Reminiscing my youth football days, I remember looking up to the high school football team. Whenever one of the 'big kids' complimented or hyped me up, it made me want to be an even better version of myself. I always wanted to prove something to somebody. As I got older, I realized that playing for the younger athletes and inspiring them was more important. These are the same kind of kids I was: coachable, motivated, and emotionally adapting. If I could lead these kids to become the best versions of themselves, it would better the community.

At my school, we have a unique tradition - at every home football game, a couple of youth athletes are selected to join the captains at the coin toss. As a captain, I am among those youth athletes, and at that moment, the amount of inspiration the kids feel is beyond words. The young athletes want to be exactly like us; it is simple: they look up to us. Although you wouldn't expect it, a simple "What's up, little man" or "Let's get this" sticks with the kid. I try to put myself in their shoes every game and see how they feel; I still remember when this scenario happened to me.

I stayed around shortly after my 6th-grade practice - running routes- and a high schooler saw me from a distance. He said to me shortly after, "You are gonna be crazy good someday." The impact this kid had on my life can't be put into words, but whenever I get the opportunity to spread the same message, I tell kids the same thing. What matters most to me on gameday is putting a smile on those kids' faces and giving them hope.

Coming from a small town, the community is filled with familiar faces; that being said, every action I take is being watched. By volunteering at local food drives, coaching at the youth football clinic, and helping at local historical societies, I set an example for the younger children to be an essential part of the community. Given our small community, every kid - including myself - goes to the same place throughout the summer: The local "Lake Club" or "Crocker Pond." Although I'm not the greatest quarterback or basketball player, and awful at soccer, I still look forward to being the 'big kid' these kids want to play with. Not only do I get to have a laugh or have some fun, but I also can facilitate these kids and allow them to play to the best of their abilities while keeping it fair and organized.

The world of sports continues to evolve, professional athletes must realize their impact. On a personal level, as a high school student-athlete, it's important that I show sportsmanship on and off the field that creates more and more admirable leaders within the younger generation that will strengthen our community.

Adam Warnetski
Ashland High School

The character of a growing child is influenced by not only their peers, but also their elders. Good sportsmanship by teens and young adults on and off the field can greatly encourage young athletes to respect their team, officials, opponents, and all other aspects of their sports. The youth of our country are very impressionable, and the only way to make sure our sport contests remain unchanged is to lead by example. While it is always nice to pick up the other team after a play, shake hands after a match, and play the game as the rules say, kids aren't always there to watch. A majority of the sports you do are not attended by kids in your town, so the only way to reach them is through off the field actions.

Ashland Youth Lacrosse provides a program where the high school team will attend a free clinic for youth players who are interested in the sport. Also, Ashland Youth Flag Football hires middle, and high school football players to referee their games. These organizations are at no shortage of volunteers, yet they still bring these athletes in to interact with their programs. This is due to the fact that high schoolers being there provides a role model that may be closer and more relatable to the younger athletes. Whether they watched them ascend the ranks of the organization before attending high school or only see them at their games, camps, and clinics it is a constant reminder of what they can be. If high school athletes don't make themselves prevalent in the community then there is no way that young athletes would be able to see what their future could be, and if high school athletes provide a bad example to those athletes then young athletes will turn two ways. One of them is quitting the sport, which decreases a child's ability to make friends and have fun. The other is that the youth could mimic their elder's behaviors, causing a toxic team environment. As an individual and as a town, commitment to youth athletics is of utmost importance. I try to attend sporting events of the youth of the community to show them that it means to have good sportsmanship. Running drills and refereeing for youth allows high school athletes, including myself, to uphold the standards of the game that is held so dearly. Without these examples so prevalent in their sporting experience young athletes don't get to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Whether young kids are in attendance or not, being a constant example to others around you is of utmost importance when participating in high school sports. As our youth continue to grow, they are increasingly influenced by their elders and peers. The presence of an older athlete on and off the field can help fuel a deep connection with both the sport and community.

Addison Pong
Notre Dame Academy

Good sportsmanship is a fundamental part of sports, teaching values like respect, humility, resilience, integrity, and the meaning of team. Younger athletes, observing good sportsmanship provides them with valuable lessons for understanding the importance of their character and behavior, not only in sports but also in life. When experienced athletes consistently display positive body language, it strengthens the message that although winning is fun and your goal, there's a right way to achieve it.

When younger athletes see the value of respecting opponents, referees, and teammates it results in good sportsmanship. In sports, emotions run high, especially when it's during a competitive game. During my basketball season there were games where I had to maintain a respectful demeanor, even when I was struggling to perform. It helps younger players understand that respect is crucial, regardless of the outcome. For example, when I'm on the court, I always make a point to shake hands with my opponents and thank the referees before and after the game, whether it ends in a win or loss. This act of respect acknowledges the effort everyone puts into the game.

Good sportsmanship promotes resilience and a positive attitude, teaching younger athletes how to handle challenges. Sports are balanced with successes and setbacks; learning to accept losses with limited frustration is a valuable lesson. Showing a positive response after a tough loss, I am able to demonstrate to my younger teammates the importance of learning from our mistakes to improve for the future. I try to encourage my teammates and focus on what we can improve for the next game rather than placing blame or dwelling on missed opportunities.

This sets an example for younger players that losses are opportunities for growth, not reasons to be discouraged.

Building a sense of community helps younger athletes feel included and valued, which is created by good sportsmanship. When athletes support each other on and off the court, field, or any athletic scenery, it creates an environment where everyone feels like they have a place, regardless of skill level. This support system is especially important for young players who maybe more vulnerable to feeling isolated or insecure. I make it a priority to cheer on and support the other athletes at my school because they're not only some of my friends but supporters at my own games. Attending other athletes' games, events, or acknowledging their achievements shows that I value them as teammates and friends which builds a positive culture throughout my community.

In conclusion, having good sportsmanship on display provides younger athletes with a model for a respectful, strong, and community-oriented atmosphere. Sports offer a unique environment where young athletes can learn about themselves and others, as well as these lessons that extend beyond the playing field. As I strive to stay consistent in modeling my composure, my hope is that these young athletes will turn into individuals who will help shape the next generation; encouraging them to not just be better athletes, but better people.!

Bree O'Dowd
Westborough High School

On the trail, in the gym and on the field, I am always encouraging and supporting my teammates no matter what, whether they do well or poorly. Failure is a steppingstone to success, and that's something I think everyone should keep in mind. I value everyone on my teams and make sure each of them know that by helping them to understand their importance and significance to our team. No teammate goes unappreciated, no matter if they are a bench warmer or hold the #1 spot on the varsity lineup. Each player makes a difference, and everyone matters. That is why I encourage my teammates to be the best version of themselves and push themselves and each other to continue to improve.

Off the field, continuously growing a welcoming and positive environment is one of my biggest goals. Making sure everyone feels included and wanted during team bonding and activities is very important. Feeling valued on a sports team is one of the most important contributors to being on a team itself. Through pasta parties, spirit days, and games themselves, I make sure the energy is always high. I make an effort that my message of every teammate's character and integrity is worth everything. Even as much as how well they perform. I love to cheer everybody on and make sure everyone feels supported in whatever way they need.

Additionally, mentoring younger athletes is something that I take pride in. During the spring time through lacrosse season, Saturday and Sunday mornings, I coach kindergarten boys and girls unisex lacrosse. I try to incorporate fun while also teaching the game. I make it so all the kids are happy and are learning new things about the game and themselves. I hope to continue with this program and make new generations love lacrosse to grow the sport. Helping to further grow our program at the high school if they choose to stick with it.

Lastly, setting a good role model is one of my main goals in life. I hope to create an opportunity for others to look up to me and see someone who they want to be like. Someone that they admire and someone that they understand puts in effort so they can do the same. Sportsmanship can be shown through various ways, but making sure you show it through all of them makes you the best teammate. Helping to create a thriving environment for new and existing athletes and continuing a good program at the high school level. That is why sportsmanship should be a priority among anyone on a team, especially leaders.

Cooper Su
Medford High School

Sportsmanship is an essential characteristic to one's life; it transcends the field and is woven into everything we do. Without sportsmanship, comradery, unity, and family become conflict, isolation, and grudges. Displaying good sportsmanship to younger generations is imperative to our world's future.

I always try to show good sportsmanship whether I am on the pitch, the lacrosse field, or the track. Teammate or opponent, I respect everyone no matter what. When the opponents fracture my wrist and I lose two sports seasons, I do not retaliate. When we lose crucial lacrosse games in overtime, I do not reprimand my teammates. When I am in a slow relay team and need to carry extra weight, I motivate and encourage my team. Building others up is miles better than demanding perfection. Good sportsmanship let my soccer team become the best in our league, let my lacrosse team become a family, and let my relay team place third in the state meet.

Acknowledging that younger people sometimes know more is a great way to show good sportsmanship. In order for the next generation to exceed us, we must be exceptional role models. Off the field, good sportsmanship looks like being a peace-maker, providing for others, and being okay with losing. I was humbled when I led middle school worship at my church. All the musicians were younger than me and some were more musically talented. I paled in comparison to them but instead of being resentful, I collaborated our skills to create the best music. By letting younger people take the limelight, our band thrived and became something

Mentoring kids on or off the field yields much fruit. I lead two small groups for my church: seventh grade boys and fifth grade. I also mentor underclassmen in every sport I play. In both cases, I drill into the kids what my father always says: "Your mind is your greatest strength, but also your greatest weakness." To harness your mind is to be unstoppable. My teammates have been transformed by this phrase and have gotten personal bests, ran the extra mile, and scored another goal. Off the field, my Sunday School kids have taken the phrase to heart and their ability to not let obstacles get in their way is astounding. They block out negative thinking and work towards success, making their school, sport, and social lives better.

Sportsmanship may be the key to all our problems. Horrific events and tragedies have occurred because people could not come to terms, and sportsmanship lets us solve that. Good sportsmanship allows us to let grudges go, allow others to thrive, and work towards the greater good, which is why the youth needs to practice this now. If there are role models enacting good sportsmanship now, our future leaders will be that much more impactful.

Elliott Lindberg
Somerset Berkley Regional High School

As a high school student involved with any sport Fall, Winter, or Spring, your top priority should be to influence the younger generation and be a good role model for the younger kids who are watching and observing you. I have vivid memories of going to my older brothers soccer games, or professional soccer games and always looking up to them. Always wishing that I could soon make it to that stage one day. I truly believe that younger kids take great influence off those who are around them and the people that they watch. Therefore, as High Schoolers it is our top priority to demonstrate good sportsmanship.

One example of how I show good sportsmanship on the field is always helping those around me up. On the Lacrosse field everyone is falling and getting shoved to the ground. So to be there for them and give them a hand helping them up is always a priority of mine. Every now and then I'll watch someone shove another kid to the ground, and not help them get back up. This is always a bad look to coaches and players. More importantly, it is a bad example for the younger kids that are watching. They take note of these things, and to watch someone chuck another to the ground and not give them a hand getting back up is unhealthy.

A second example of how I show good sportsmanship is always keeping a level head towards the referee. I am a certified referee in the U.S. and as one I have a lot of respect for the referees at my games. It is the worst getting yelled at by an angry parent, and it is unhealthy for the children watching. I always try to show respect to the referees at my game and I always put myself in their shoes, because I know what that feels like. When I see kids and parents yelling at the referees, I get upset because I know there is nothing that they can do about it and they are just doing their job. This is another way that I show good sportsmanship, being respectful to the referees.

The third and last way that I show respect and good sportsmanship on and off the field is a good overall attitude and a good relationship with the opposing players. Lacrosse can be a violent game, tensions can always get high, but having a good relationship and talking to the opposing team is always a relief. Even if this just means saying, "good shot" or "good hit." I've played against kids who congratulate me on a good play I've made, and it is always a good feeling and is always uplifting. However, on the other hand, I've played against kids who are rude and will discourage me after a play. It is important for a child watching a game to see two players from opposing teams give each other a fist bump after a play, not beat each other down.

In conclusion, I find it very important to practice and show these things in games. As athletes, even though it might not seem like it, there are always kids watching and looking up to you. However, I believe it is not just the athletes, I think parents too have to demonstrate good sportsmanship and portray the game that their kids could potentially be playing, as a respectful and healthy environment.

Jason Cody
Pittsfield High School

Something my father said stuck in my brain from a very young age; "Somebody is always watching." Now once he said that to me, it made me realize that my character will always mean something to someone. This is similar to sportsmanship, one of the most overlooked aspects of youth sports in today's generation. Sportsmanship is the act that athletes show to support one another on and off the field. As an athlete myself in the high school sports world, I have seen a lot of poor sportsmanship while also seeing good sportsmanship. Something that I take pride in with my teammates on the teams that I play for is picking each other up no matter what happens throughout the entire year. Showing kids correct sportsmanship is what all high school athletes should be doing, as young athletes always look up to high school athletes like myself. If you are ever at a high school sporting event, I am more than sure that there are always young athletes there watching us.

Sportsmanship is more than just on the field actions; it is off-the-field actions as well. With that being said, three ways I personally demonstrate sportsmanship off the field are often checking in on my peers, cleaning up after others in my community and finally doing the little things like holding the door for people or helping people get over things that are happening and be easy to talk to. One real-life example that I showed in a baseball game was when I was pitching in the game, and I hit the batter by accident so I went to check on him at 1st base.

On the other hand, three examples of my sportsmanship on the field is way more direct. For example, helping others up when they fall, picking up teammates when they are down physically and mentally, and constantly showing I care about my teammates by smiling and giving high fives and so on. Even though to some young athletes these little things don't stand out and mean something to them, more than half of them actually will see what you're doing on and off the field and try to copy what you're doing themselves.

Sports is my passion and means the world to me. One day, coaching young athletes is something that I want to do. I want to coach young athletes to play the game the right way and sportsmanship is top on that list. Since I am leading by example right now as a high schooler, I am hoping that somebody will take after me and lead the youth in the right direction so that when I am ready to coach these athletes, good sportsmanship will be the expectation. All in all, sportsmanship is what all high school athletes should be showing the young athletes as it is one of the most important aspects of the sport overall anyone who showed particularly good sportsmanship.

Olivia Kuhn
Hanover High School

As highschoolers, we are the models that kids think are the most awesome people on Earth. Knowing this, teenagers should influence them to be courteous athletes. This teaches kids how to improve from mistakes, keep emotions in check, and support their teammates. Therefore, I always exhibit good sportsmanship on and off the field by words of encouragement, respecting people involved in the game, and keeping emotions in check when I make mistakes. Hopefully by displaying these qualities, I will influence the next generation to present amazing sportsmanship.

Using words to encourage teammates is a outstanding way to show sportsmanship. I use words like “Nice job” and “Great pass/hit” when my teammates perform well and “Nice effort” and “Nice try” when they have mistakes. I believe it's important to encourage teammates to show that they are trying their best. This is remarkable sportsmanship since it creates positive environments. It's important to use these words in front of kids, for it teaches them to encourage teammates rather than yell at them for mistakes.

Conversely, respecting people involved in your games is an excellent way to show sportsmanship. I respect my teammates and coaches by accepting feedback from them in a positive way. It's important as everyone on your team wants to win, so being negative won't help. Moreover, I respect the area I played in since that place decided to host me and my team. I pick everything up so they will invite us back again. Showing respect to the other team is also important, because it makes myself look bad to disrespect them. Displaying respect to kids is important so they don't be disrespectful and show poor sportsmanship.

Ultimately, keeping emotions in check is crucial to show kids. Nowadays, people put too much emotion into the outcome of their game. Most times, it's not about results, but it's about accepting mistakes and letting them improve you rather than weigh you down. I keep my emotions checked on the field by not letting a bad play get in the way of the impressive things I know I'm capable of doing.

Focusing on one mistake will make you unprepared to give your best effort next time. Overall, demonstrating sportsmanship on and off the field is crucial so kids who look up to high school athletes can learn from them and start displaying sportsmanship themselves. Using words of encouragement, respecting everything involved with the game, and keeping emotions checked are excellent ways to convey exceptional sportsmanship to children. These are all examples of things I demonstrate so the kids who look up to me can be more positive athletes. Ultimately, sportsmanship is not just about the game, but also the environment you create.

Reid Ohanesian
Ayer-Shirley Regional High School

As a high school athlete, I find myself in a special position where athletes look up to me as a role model. It's a responsibility I take seriously, because my actions on and off the field can greatly influence players beginning to develop athletic skills. Demonstrating good sportsmanship is extremely important to me, not only for my own performance but also for creating a positive attitude among younger athletes.

Good sportsmanship means treating opponents, teammates, and officials with respect. It can set an example for learning good character both in sports and in life. Professional athletes like Jackie Robinson and Billie Jean King are two examples of role models. Jackie Robinson was a baseball star that suffered racial discrimination despite his incredible talent. His courage and ability to show respect and integrity as an African-American player inspired others to pursue their athletic goals. Tennis player Billie Jean King became a role model for gender equality in sports. Her actions on and off the tennis court showed young athletes that they could stand up for their beliefs while maintaining respect for their competitors.

In my own experience, there was a situation that demonstrated sportsmanship during a varsity hockey game. We were playing against a big rival and the game was very intense. During the third period, one of the other teams' best players was hit hard into the boards and it was clear he was hurt. I was the first to stop and help the injured player up, asking if he was okay before continuing the game. That moment reminded everyone that even though it was a tough competition, we are all part of the same hockey community. It showed young hockey players in the stands that caring for one another and showing respect even during competition makes us better athletes. Winning is important, but how you treat others is just as significant.

Sportsmanship can take place outside of the game as well. Jake Thibeault demonstrates what an athlete can be even after having a devastating hockey injury and paralysis. Jake often uses his social media platform to promote kindness and sportsmanship. He shares messages about the importance of respect and support among athletes, regardless of the level of competition. He is an admirable player on all levels!

Mentoring creates a culture for positive behaviors. When younger athletes see their older peers displaying good sportsmanship and helping others, they are more likely to display these behaviors as well. This reinforces respect and kindness between athletes. Mentoring can lead to improving friendships and can support another athlete's skill development. When older players take the time to guide and support younger ones, we set a standard for them to follow. It can inspire them to carry respect and kindness into their own games and lives.

In conclusion, high school athletes have an opportunity to serve as role models for younger athletes. By displaying good sportsmanship, we inspire new athletes to learn these behaviors. Through acts of kindness during the game and mentoring outside the game, we can teach sportsmanship in young athletes and make a difference..

Sonny Dellasant
Oakmont Regional High School

Think back to your first time watching the varsity team play, sitting on those rock solid, often freezing, bleachers; your back was sore, legs were cramped, but you didn't mind. All that you cared about was seeing your favorite players, in your favorite colors, play the game you love.

Whether it was the captain of the team or the last person on the bench, you worshipped them. All of them were your idols. All you could do was sit in awe and hope that they slapped their sweaty hand to yours on the way back to the locker room. A high five - the universal symbol of sportsmanship.

Now, I am on the other side. Being a counselor for Oakmont's annual summer camp, I made all of the campers give everyone a high five. A small task that took no more than five seconds. While this may seem a negligible act, it can spread tremendous positive energy. At first, some of the kids looked at me a little funny, but by the last day, I didn't even have to tell the kids to slap hands. By teaching the younger generation to embrace rather than humiliate, we engrave good customs that form contagious habits.

Now you might think back and laugh a little, wondering why you were so obsessed with these now seemingly average players. What you need to realize is just as you idolized these athletes as a kid, they now idolize you. That is why it is crucial for high school athletes to embrace the younger generation and show them how to act in a sportsmanlike manner.

Another way that I helped our future athletes to show sportsmanship is by teaching them to respect referees. Last winter season, I officiated the Oakmont Recreational Basketball League grades 1st - 8th. Because I was a familiar face in the community, the athletes did not try to argue or throw mean comments my way. I then began to see a positive change in the way that the players acted towards, not just me, but all of the referees. The reason for this change was because the kids now were able to see that it can be challenging to make every call right and referees are humans just like them.

Finally - and probably the easiest but most important thing - I included and interacted with the younger generation. Just by simply having a conversation or tapping a kid's hand you can make such an impact in their lives. As those same athletes get older, they will remember how it felt to be included and hopefully they will decide to be that role model for someone younger. The main point I want to stress is that sportsmanship is learned behavior. To engrave this idea in a kid's head you need to lead by example. That small example of sportsmanship could be something as small as a high five.

.