

PARENT'S CODE OF CONDUCT

The Iowa Athletic Council believes parents play a vital role in the development student-athletes. We ask that this code of conduct be distributed so parents, players and coaches have an opportunity to read them.

- I will encourage good sportsmanship by being a positive role model.
- I will try my best to make athletics a positive experience for everyone involved, i.e., participants, coaches, officials, and spectators.
- I will insist my player treat other players, coaches, officials, and fans with respect.
- I will reinforce the school's drug and alcohol free policies and refrain from use alcohol and other drugs before or during contests.
- I will do my best to understand and appreciate the rules of the contest.
- I will show appreciation for an outstanding play by either team.
- I will be a "team" fan, not a "my child" fan.
- I will help my child learn that success is measured by the development of skills, not winning or losing.
- If I have a concern, I will talk to the coach at the appropriate time and place, i.e., never before, during, or immediately after a contest.
- I do my best to remember my ticket to a school athletic event provides me with the privilege of observing the contest, not berating officials, coaches, or players.

Information provided by the Iowa Athletic Council.

Parent's Role in Youth Athletics

By Tom Doyle, Athletic Director at Seattle Prep

Do you ever wonder what athletes think when their parents scream at officials, get kicked out of contests or taunt other players? Do you ever wonder how your sons or daughters would like you to act in the stands?

I recently asked our fall-sport athletes what goes through their minds at those times and was surprised by their passionate reactions. We know that the goals of high-school sports programs include providing students with healthy activities, teaching them skills, helping them to be better citizens, teammates and communicators.

Nowhere is there mention of an athletic program existing for the parents. The parents' role is that of a spectator. Too many parents become over-involved in their child's athletic experience.

Nationwide, the incidences of abuse toward officials, coaches and other parents are rising dramatically. Last year, a hockey parent was convicted and sentenced to a long prison term for killing a coach after an argument. Officials are leaving the profession in large numbers because they no longer want to face the anger and negative remarks they hear at every contest.

More and more coaches cite parent conflicts as reasons for taking time off, changing jobs or giving up on coaching altogether. More and more kids are choosing to play only one sport, or dropping out of sports completely, because of the pressure they feel from their parents.

What will our programs be like five years from now if this continues? We are at a crisis point and must make efforts today to bring sanity back to our programs.

Our sons and daughters who play high-school sports seem to have a grasp of the gravity of the situation. They instinctively know how their parents ought to behave at contests. **The players asked me to plead with their parents to refrain from:**

- Trying to teach them how to do something "correctly" after a game.

- Coaching during games when they aren't the coach.

- Being asked to leave a field by an official.

- Taunting other players, opponents, refs.

- Yelling things at coaches.

- Coming to a game drunk or after drinking.

- Acting disappointed with what the athletes are doing instead of reassuring them that they will do better next time.

Our athletes asked me to encourage their parents:

- To not make a scene

- To come to their contests and cheer for the team.

- To not get frustrated if their kid isn't playing well or the team is losing.

- To not become too involved in their kids' sports lives.

- To stay in the stands and know their role.

- To encourage regardless of performance.

- To not be angry at the player or the coach if their son/daughter doesn't play.

- To relax and let kids have fun.

- To remember it is their child's team.

- To understand that it is not a life-or-death situation; it is just a game.

Your sons and daughters hope to see you on the sideline, along the course, or in the bleachers often this fall. Nothing is quite as entertaining as high-school sports. Make a difference by taking to heart our student-athletes' advice, and support our athletes by promoting good sportsmanship and common sense at contests this year.

About the author: Tom Doyle, beginning his 21st year as athletic director at Seattle Prep, has been a high-school teacher, coach and sports administrator in Seattle for over 30 years. The 52-year-old father of two has coached baseball, football and girls basketball and is past president and current treasurer of the state's organization of athletic directors.

10 WAYS TO RAISE A GOOD SPORT

From the September 2001 IHSAA Bulletin

1. **Expect Respect** - You get what you expect when it comes to respect and moral character.
2. **Be a Role Model** - Actions and attitudes speak louder than words when it comes to being a good sport.
3. **Reinforce Good Sportsmanship** - Good sportsmanship deserves reward and praise.
4. **Encourage a Wider Perspective** - Help children see their actions through another person's eyes.
5. **Use the Language of Sportsmanship** - Character, integrity, class, dignity, respect, honor, and humility are a few key words.
6. **Discuss the Two Sides of Sports** - Help students understand the competitive and play aspects of sports.
7. **Look Beyond the Headlines** - Discuss news stories related to both good and bad sportsmanship.
8. **Promote Sportsmanship Reflectiveness** - Help youth reflect on sports from a sportsmanship perspective.
9. **Encourage Personal Responsibility** - Teach children to be gracious winners and losers.
10. **Help Children Remember to Play** - Remember, **THE NUMBER 1 REASON CHILDREN PLAY SPORTS IS TO HAVE FUN!**

Adapted & reprinted with permission from the Athletes for a Better World Newsletter. Authors: Craig Clifford & Randolph Feezell. Authors of Coaching For Character.

PARENT / COACH RELATIONSHIPS

Both parenting and coaching are very difficult vocations. By establishing an understanding between coaches and parents, both are better able to accept the actions of the other and provide a more positive experience for everyone.

Parents have the right to know, and understand, the expectations placed on them and their children. Coaches have the right to know that if parents have a concern, they will discuss it with the coach at the appropriate time and place.

Communication parents should expect from their child's coach:

- 1) Coach's philosophy.
- 2) Expectations the coach has for your son or daughter, as well as other players on the team.
- 3) Locations and times of practices and contests.
- 4) Team requirements, i.e., fees, special equipment needed, school & team rules, off-season expectations.
- 5) Procedures that will be followed if your child becomes injured during participation.

Communication coaches expect from parents:

- 1) Concerns regarding their son or daughter expressed directly to the coach at the appropriate time and place.
- 2) Specific concerns in regard to the coach's philosophy and/or expectations.
- 3) Notification of any schedule conflicts well in advance.

As your child becomes involved interscholastic athletics, they will experience some of the most rewarding moments of their lives. It's important to understand there may be times when things do not go the way you or your child wishes. These are the times discussion with the coach is encouraged.

Appropriate concerns to discuss with a coach:

- 1) The mental and physical treatment of your child.
- 2) What your child needs to do to improve.
- 3) Concerns about your child's behavior.

It is very difficult to accept your child is not playing as much as you may hope. Coaches make decisions based on what they believe is in the best interests of all students participating. As you can see from the list above, certain things can and should be discussed with your child's coach. Other things, such as those listed next, must be left to the discretion of the coach.

Issues NOT appropriate for discussion with your child's coach:

- 1) How much playing time each athlete is getting.
- 2) Team strategy.
- 3) Play calling.
- 4) Any situation that deals with other student-athletes.

There are situations that may require a conference between the coach and parent. These are not discouraged, as it is important for each party to have a clear understanding of the others' position. When these conferences are necessary, the following procedure is suggested to help promote resolution to the issue.

If a parent has a concern to discuss with the coach, the following procedure should be followed:

- 1) Call the coach to set up an appointment.
- 2) If the coach cannot be reached, call the athletic director and ask him or her to set up a meeting with the coach for you.
- 3) Think about what you expect to accomplish as a result of the meeting.
- 4) Stick to discussing the facts, as you understand them.
- 5) Do not confront the coach before, during or after a practice or contest. These can be emotional times for both the parent and coach. Meetings of this nature do not promote resolution of the situation, but often escalate it.

What should a parent do if the meeting with the coach didn't provide satisfactory resolution?

- 1) Call the athletic director to set up a meeting with the athletic director, coach, and parent present.
- 2) At this meeting, an appropriate next step can be determined, if necessary.

Students' involvement in co-curricular activities has been proven to increase their chances of success later in life. We hope the information contained in this handout helps make that experience more enjoyable for everyone involved.

Information provided by the Iowa Athletic Council
