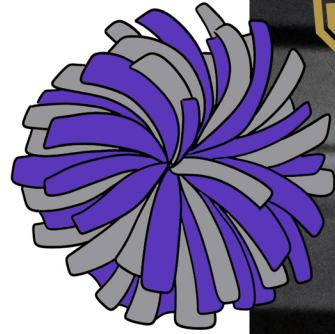
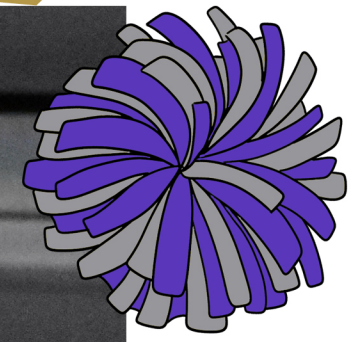


SPORTSMANSHIP

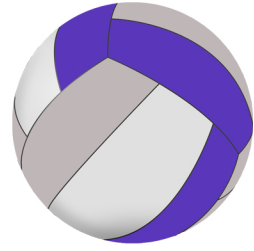


What sportsmanship means to referees, players, coaches, and fans

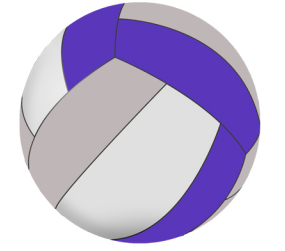


Improving sportsmanship on the court, on the bench, and in the stands





SPORTSMANSHIP



Diane Balcom: a referee's reference

by Adeline Hunt

Diane Balcom is a familiar face around schools in central Nebraska. Balcom has been a devoted referee for over 40 years, reffing junior varsity basketball and all levels of volleyball. Over the years, she has seen high school sports change with new rules, different uniforms, and a variety of coaching strategies, but one constant is that refereeing is a challenging job, especially when it comes to sportsmanship.

As a referee, Balcom is aware of bad sportsmanship, and she works hard to not let it affect her. To not let the poor sportsmanship be taken personally, she reminds herself of a key point. “The biggest thing is they usually don’t know the rules,” said Balcom. She also acknowledges that often fans are just saying things to try to make the event more “interesting” in their eyes.

Balcom sees bad sportsmanship being a problem more with fans and coaches than the competing athletes. She believes bad sportsmanship often starts with a coach's actions, but then moves into the crowd. Balcom said, “The most common unsportsmanlike behavior I see is just being abusive with language.”

Once the atmosphere at an event is negative, sometimes the players are affected and begin acting unsportsmanlike as well. Balcom said, “Out of all of the fans, student sections tend to be the worst.” Since the typical high school student finds it entertaining and amusing to disagree with every possible call they can, it makes it challenging to keep the atmosphere positive.

Over time, Balcom has seen the importance of winning shift. Not only do the athletes want to win, but the parents want them to win at all costs too, and Balcom believes it has a negative impact on sportsmanship. “Parents have put so much money in their athletes to be better. But that does not always give you more wins.” The win at all costs mentality can lead some parents to make negative comments to referees.

Setting an appropriate tone for events begins with school leadership. Balcom believes, “Sportsmanship starts with your AD, and parents can provide positive leadership as well.”

Though bad sportsmanship can be seen at sporting events, Balcom also sees positive behaviors as well. “I have many athletes and coaches come up to me after a game and thank me. Some even will say I did a good job!” These encouraging statements are part of what keeps Balcom going as a referee. Balcom also loves meeting the coaches and school staff that work at events, but mostly it is “being around the athletes. I love athletics and seeing the athletes compete. Athletics can prepare you for life.”



Diane Balcom speaks to coaches and players before the October 19, 2023, volleyball game versus Wilcox-Hildreth held at Southern Valley.





SPORTSMANSHIP



Kamden Bose: a player's perspective

by Ehme Linner

Kamden Bose watches a shot in the holiday tournament game against Arapahoe on December 28, 2023.



In high school athletics, sportsmanship plays an important role, especially for the athletes. From the stands to the court or field, it's imperative for everyone to keep their conduct fair and respectful. Whether good or bad sportsmanship is being displayed, it can influence the course of the game being played, and it most certainly affects student athletes. Three sport senior athlete Kamden Bose said, "Sportsmanship is important because it sustains respect in sports. It makes sure players, opponents, officials, coaches, and fans have respect for the rules of the game and the opposing teams."

In Bose's four years of high school athletics, he has seen many good as well as bad examples of sportsmanship. Bose recalls one of his many positive experiences. "An example of good sportsmanship that I've witnessed in a game was when Sandhills Valley players helped our team up after they would tackle the ball carrier."

While there have been many good examples of sportsmanship, there have also been some bad ones that stand out for Bose. "A common form of bad sportsmanship that I've seen is fans yelling at the referees. Even though they occasionally may make the wrong call, it doesn't give fans the right to yell at the referees."


Displaying good sportsmanship is crucial in maintaining a positive atmosphere for student athletes, but athletes have no control over what goes on in the crowd. Successful athletes are ones that can ignore comments coming from the stands. Bose said, "As I've gotten older, the crowd during my performances has affected me less and less. I have learned how to drown out the noises in the crowd and focus on the game I'm playing."

It is essential for all individuals involved in high school sports to prioritize good sportsmanship to ensure that the values of respect and fairness are upheld so games can be played fairly while also being fun. "Sportsmanship plays a large part in high school athletics. Playing a sport is a privilege, and you should have respect for those who play it," stated Bose.


Without good sportsmanship there would be no sense of fair play, respect, or enjoyment of the game being played. These are what make athletics a positive learning experience for teenagers. Sportsmanship affects everyone involved but has a lasting impact on the athletes. Bose said, "Sportsmanship makes me a better leader and reminds me to be appreciative of the opportunity I have playing high school sports."

SPORTSMANSHIP DOS AND DON'TS

YES
YES
YES  CLAP POLITELY TO ACKNOWLEDGE
A GOOD PLAY BY AN OPPONENT

NEVER POST NEGATIVE CONTENT
ABOUT PLAYERS, REFEREES, OR
COACHES ONLINE  **NO**
NO
NO

YES
YES
YES  CONGRATULATE THE
WINNERS AND ALWAYS
SHOW RESPECT

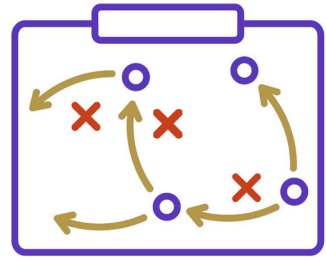
DON'T BE TOO LOUD AND DISTURB
PLAYERS AND REFEREES  **NO**
NO
NO

YES
YES
YES  OFFER OTHER PLAYERS A HAND
WHEN THEY ARE ON THE
FLOOR/GROUND

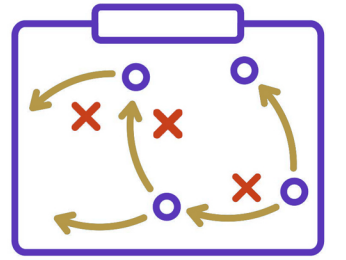
REFRAIN FROM ACCUSING
A PLAYER OF CHEATING  **NO**
NO
NO

REMEMBER!
ALWAYS REPRESENT YOURSELF AND YOUR
SCHOOL IN A POSITIVE MANNER





SPORTSMANSHIP



Richard McDonald: a coach's context

by Victoria Bose

Sportsmanship in high school is shown by many different people. One group that gets a lot of attention are head coaches. Richard McDonald has been the head girls basketball coach at Southern Valley for six years. In his time as a head coach, he has seen both good and bad examples of sportsmanship, but McDonald knows that his actions can set the tone at a competition.

Coach McDonald tries to be proactive in his relationships with other coaches. He said, "There are a few ways I feel I show sportsmanship as a coach. First, I introduce myself and spend a little time talking to the other coach (before the contest starts). The second way is by limiting how much we press bad teams."

Building relationships with other coaches is important to McDonald. "I always let the other coach know that if they ever need anything please let me know. I love helping others out." Sometimes though, other coaches are not as open to communication."

The level of communication can vary from one coach to the next. McDonald said, "Most of the time the other coaches are pretty good with their level of sportmanship, but it bugs me when a coach will not talk before a game. I understand not everyone likes to talk, but a quick 'how are you' and 'good luck' shows some class."

McDonald acknowledges that sportsmanship comes from all over the gym, not just the players and coaches. The crowd plays a big part too. McDonald said, "It is crazy how (the crowd's) interactions can shift players thoughts and actions. Most of the time it is negative: yelling at the players, yelling at the coaches, yelling at refs. If it were positive, I am sure it would have the same effect. Positive yelling, positive results."

Competitions can be intense, and McDonald knows that it can be hard to control emotions, but at the same time adults need to think about how they act. "The crowd is mostly adults and should have an understanding for what it is. Unfortunately, they get wrapped up into the emotions of the game, and that is what drives the behavior. It can be hard to remember that it is a game with teenagers."

McDonald might not be able to control the crowd, but as a coach, he can set the tone with his players. "Over the six years here as a head coach, there have been times with the other coaches too to make sure it is not continuing to happen."

In the end, sportsmanship can not only affect the way the game is played, but also have lasting effects when the clock runs out. McDonald said, "It makes it less about who you are playing and more about you as a person. When I think about sportsmanship, it goes beyond the game. After the buzzer it is awesome to see players talking from both sides. This only happens if your actions in the game respect the other team. People remember how you made them feel. Out of high school someone you played against may become your friend. This would not happen if you treat people poorly during a game."

McDonald wants to have a successful program, but he knows that part of the success is the lasting effects of good sportsmanship. "Teaching your players to be better people will always help them on and off the court. Being a good player is an awesome thing, but sportsmanship goes a lot further in life after sports."

Head girls basketball coach, Richard McDonald, speaks to players during a time out on December 9, 2023 in the game against Overton.





SPORTSMANSHIP



Mark Grove: an administrator's angle

by Celia Zetterberg

When it comes to talking about sportsmanship in schools, administration plays a key role. At Southern Valley, each game or activity has an administrator who supervises the student section and crowd. These individuals provide leadership and guidance, ensuring that the atmosphere at games remains positive. Mark Grove has been a principal at Southern Valley since 2009 and supervises many games and activities in both the elementary and high school.

Having good sportsmanship at a school is not always an easy task. It takes planning and requires consistency when implementing policies. Grove said, "Promoting sportsmanship within a school requires a multifaceted approach that involves creating a positive and inclusive culture around sports. The school, students, and community members must be involved to come up with a well-rounded and acceptable policy. By involving all of these people, knowing what the common goal is, schools can create an environment that fosters a culture of good sportsmanship among fans and students alike."

According to the Southern Valley Activity Handbook, the intent of the activities program "is to provide a wide variety of opportunities for our students to explore their gifts and talents through the arts and competition. The intent is for students to learn the value of teamwork, dedication, determination, goal setting, and sportsmanship. As a district we want our fans and parents to set the example of sportsmanship through respect for the game, opponents, and officials."



Principal Mark Grove supervises the Arapahoe home basketball game on January 18, 2024.

Southern Valley has guidelines if fans or parents are showing bad sportsmanship such as meeting with the activities director and receiving a written warning. If fans are ejected from a game, it is much more serious. Ejections results in a 14 day, 365 day, and then lifetime suspension from Southern Valley Activies and Athletics.

In addition to fans and parents, Grove knows that coaches provide a vital and visual example when it comes to showing good sportsmanship. "The players and the fans feed off the coach. They need to lead by example on how everyone should act during both practices and competitions," said Grove.

Additionally, Grove also has high expectations for players. "We are trying to raise amazing young adults who go on to be successful. It begins by showing and treating others with respect. Anytime we leave a place with our students, we want people to talk about how respectful and well-behaved our students were while visiting."

Supervising students and attending activities and sporting events is a highlight of Grove's job. He said, "My favorite thing about watching any activity is getting the chance to watch students, who were once young elementary students, go on to grow into young adults and then shine in their chosen activity. I just love watching them knowing that students who are involved in activities will know how to handle adversity later in life."

Sportsmanship
It's everyone's responsibility!





SPORTSMANSHIP



What happens in the stands matters

by Ashton Kirkendall

Sportsmanship is one of the main lessons that is taught during high school sports; however, spectators in the stands need to demonstrate this as well. Athletes are not the only people who need to know how to show good sportsmanship. As a part of the crowd, it is exceedingly important that fans contribute to good sportsmanship. Establishing a standard of how fans should act can help create an exciting environment in the crowd to develop the overall culture of a school.

Kristi Bose is the parent of four Southern Valley Eagles. One of them is a senior starter for the football and basketball teams. Bose has noticed, over her many years as a fan, that it is difficult to encourage a positive attitude when the people surrounding you in the stands are negative, and that negativity can affect what is going on in the competition. “Many times I feel like the referees call more fouls when our crowd gets negative,” Bose said. “It absolutely matters how the crowd acts.”

Bad sportsmanship also affects other fans. How one person acts in the crowd can influence the behavior of others. If one person starts saying inappropriate things, the surrounding fans sometimes join in, especially in intense games. Southern Valley community member and supporter, Dave Hunt, said, “I am personally affected by loud, obnoxious fans when I sit with them because I then begin to yell things (at the officials) that are not appropriate. I have learned that I need to be strategic in where I sit so I don’t become a fan with a bad reputation.”

It’s not just the fans that create the atmosphere in a game. “How the coach responds to officials also affects me. I always want to support our coach, so if he is becoming irate at the officials, I tend to get a little more vocal,” Hunt said.

Crowd energy can affect the players too, and not just with bad sportsmanship. It can go the other way. Hunt has noticed that “the crowd can bring positive energy to a game and players usually respond well to a high-energy atmosphere.”

Bose has noticed this trend as well. She said, “Positive comments toward players help give them confidence and they perform better.” That positive energy should be the goal of all fans in the stands.

Learning to display good sportsmanship will benefit student-athletes for much longer than just high school sports. When athletes learn to cooperate and maintain a calm attitude when things go wrong, it will help them when they eventually are in a professional setting. “Showing good sportsmanship is one learning experience that develops character that continues throughout life,” Hunt explains.

Hunt makes it a point to talk to student-athletes about their character. He said, “I have told many high school student-athletes over the years that I (and most fans) will not remember the record of a specific season or even the outstanding play that one athlete makes. However, I will remember the character of the player for many years. I will remember their character both on and off the court which is more important in life than wins and losses.”



Southern Valley supporter, Dave Hunt, watches the Eagles play Bertrand on January 4, 2024.





SPORTSMANSHIP



*When you win, don't rub it in
Raising the bar of sportsmanship at Southern Valley*

Sportsmanship can be looked at from different perspectives; there are good types of sportsmanship and there are bad types. Southern Valley students and athletes have shown both. This year we need to up our game and stay on the positive side of sportsmanship.

A common definition of sportsmanship is fair and generous behavior or treatment of others, especially in sports. Being an athlete is tough, especially when it comes to sportsmanship. Highschool athletes mimic a lot of what they see online or on television. If their favorite NBA player does something good or bad, then they will most likely do it also. High school athletes need to remember that they are representing the school and the community, not trying to gain attention or impress their friends.

There are many different opinions when it comes to sportsmanship. Some students say that others are just way too sensitive about it. At Southern Valley, unsportsmanlike conduct is not a huge problem, but we could be a little bit better at showing good sportsmanship. For example, when an athlete tries to help an opponent up and the opponent doesn't take the help, it can be frustrating. Later in the game, if that same athlete tries helping someone, it can be tempting to not take their hand. To some people, that could be unsportsmanlike while others think it is fine. As athletes, we should just take their hand and move on with the game. As representatives of Southern Valley, our athletes should be doing this more in competitions.

Sportsmanship is essential when it comes to high school sports, and it is not just the athletes that need to improve their conduct. Last year at the NSAA Girls State Basketball Tournament, the student sections of opposing teams would turn around, when the other team's lineups were being announced. The Southern Valley student section did this as well. Students were just trying to be supportive of their schools' teams, but that action is unsportsmanlike. Instead of turning around we can do better. Our student section can clap twice after an athlete is announced to show our respect towards them as competitors. When we are winning games, we need to just celebrate with our fans and players and not do anything to target the other team. Taking the high road is always better. Being unsportsmanlike reflects badly on all of us.

Athletes and fans need to have a better understanding about sportsmanship and pay a bit more attention to it. It's not a huge problem here, but we can still improve and do better. It is a topic that should always be on our minds for every player and every person in the stands. We all need to do our part. Our community needs to demonstrate good sportsmanship throughout the whole year for all sports and activities. We aren't doing too bad, but we can do better.

