



Sportsmanship Goes Beyond Shirts or Not

By Bill Gosse

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Last week the WIAA Sportsmanship Committee announced a recommendation to ban shirtless male fans at indoor high school games.

The reaction from across the country has been incredible. Even the New York Times picked up the story.

The sportsmanship committee was established for the right reasons and is making an effort to improve the environment surrounding youth sports.

If it is deemed improper for kids to be shirtless at games, let's show our kids the right way to display good sportsmanship. Let's guide them in their wonderful creativity.

Instead of a reaction to their well-intentioned attempts, we need a reaction to the appalling behavior in the stands and on the sidelines.

Encourage those who are trying to do what's right. Tell people who stand up and curse to sit down and be quiet. Respect those with the honor of coaching our kids. If we establish a line for our kids, have the courage to do it for the adults, too.

We've seen mandatory behavioral classes implemented in Delaware for youth football leagues. Parents must pass a course before being allowed to attend games. The response has been positive and enrollment in the league is at an all-time high. Is this what we want?

People have told me the environment surrounding youth sports won't change until someone dies. How many more people must die before we get the message?

Have we forgotten the two hockey parents fighting each other after a practice only seven years ago? One of those fathers died as a result of his wounds.

Do we realize our kids are watching? Some of them know what they want.

Here are comments from a sixth-grade winner of a sportsmanship essay contest: "Good sportsmanship is something that should take place everywhere, whether it is at recess, gym, band or anywhere outside of school, and you can show it in many ways. It doesn't

always have to be shaking someone's hand after a game. If you are getting ready to play kickball and it's time to pick teams, it's good sportsmanship to pick some kids that aren't the best. You may find they have a lot to offer your team. You could even end up making a friend.”

Out of the mouths of babes...