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## **ARE YOU CHILDREN “GOOD SPORTS”?**

With school now in session, after-school activities have begun to flourish. Many children select sports as their after school choice. How many of them have learned to be a “good sport”?

Webster defines sportsmanship as “characteristics of or behavior befitting a person who can take loss or defeat without complaint or victory without gloating and who treats opponents with fairness, generosity, courtesy, etc.”

The athletes themselves can exemplify these characteristics, as well as the crowd watching the game. Have you ever noticed how parents in the crowd act? Some scream and holler at the umpire or referee because they disagree with the call. Some yell instruction to their children. Others watch the game intently. They cheer and enjoy the game.

The behavior of parents has a big influence on the behavior of their children. Consider ways to help your children learn to be a “good sport” as they compete in sporting events.

- **Model good sportsmanship.**
- **Praise your children for the things they do well.** Don't make fun of errors or yell at your children during the event. Don't boo or use inappropriate language when the other team makes a good play. Instead, applaud the efforts of all players no matter who wins.
- **Respect authority.** Be respectful when talking to your child's coach. Also support decisions and calls made by the umpire or referee. If something happens that seems unfair, work through the official channels to make the necessary changes. Don't let the feelings of the moment allow you to become irate and do something you regret later.
- **Encourage competition that is fair.** Competition causes individuals to do their best so goals can be achieved. Parents should not encourage, support, or condone dishonesty or cheating for the sake of winning. Instead, encourage your children to play hard and do their best. When your children do well (whether the team wins or loses) celebrate their success in a respectful way.

Sports teach children many lessons. They learn how to be part of a team. They learn about what fair means and how others should be treated. They learn about winning and losing. Parents can help to make these experiences positive

- **Accept your child's abilities.** Don't be tempted to evaluate your child's abilities by making comparisons with other children the same age. Each

child develops differently. Parents should help their children evaluate their performance in terms of their own progress and accomplishments.

- **Support your child.** Sometimes children need encouragement. Provide this and don't demand too much.
- **Be selective.** Help your children select sports activities that incorporate good sportsmanship. The coach has a tremendous influence on the children and sets the standard for the entire team.
- **Correct inappropriate behavior.** If your child does something that is not appropriate, talk to him/her about the behavior. Determine what would have been better to do. Be observant and watch the lessons your children are learning. Encourage those that are appropriate and correct those that are not.

Sportsmanship can be summed up in three words – courtesy, respect, and consideration. How are your children doing in developing these qualities?