

## ARTICLE 12

### SPORTSMANSHIP

#### **Section 1: SPORTSMANSHIP**

The Rhode Island Interscholastic League Principal's Committee on Athletics has been working on a common set of sportsmanship standards that can be implemented in every member school. Concerns with the behavior of student athletes and coaches on the field or court and the ever increasing unsportsmanlike behavior of spectators, the committee believes it is essential that all member schools have sportsmanship standards and programs in place.

Member schools are expected to conduct their relations with each other at all levels of competition in a spirit of good sportsmanship. Everyone involved has the obligation to see clearly his/her influence and act accordingly.

The RIIL acknowledges that the school administration is responsible for the athletic program, including the making of broad and specific policies relating to sportsmanship and the conduct of activities in the school. The school principal has the responsibility for establishing the principles of good sportsmanship in the minds of the entire school community. He/she must realize that the kind of sportsmanship that is practiced or displayed by the representatives of his/her school will reflect to its credit or otherwise.

The Rhode Island Interscholastic League has been vested with the responsibility to ensure that all contests during the regular season or regular tournament competition are conducted satisfactorily, as it applies to the principles of good sportsmanship. The RIIL will be guided by the following rule:

**HIGH STANDARDS OF COURTESY, FAIR PLAY AND SPORTSMANSHIP MUST PREVAIL AT ALL REGULAR MEMBER SCHOOL COMPETITIONS AND ALL INVOLVED MUST ALWAYS PURSUE VICTORY WITH HONOR.**

While this rule is a general standard in terms of enforcement, it is the heart of the entire RIIL program. Good sportsmanship, respect for the rules, respect for others, fair play, and ethics are basically the motives through which an interscholastic athletic program is justified and defended.

*As a minimum, the RIIL Principal's Committee on Athletics expects member schools and leagues to have clearly defined and articulated standards of sportsmanship which are enforced at all levels of play. The standards should align with the standards which follow. The standards should be published in the student athlete/parent handbook and in other documents and publications provided by the school. Expectations for spectators should be posted at each contest site and announced when appropriate.*

#### **Section 2: TAUNTING**

- A. If you examine the standards of conduct required in high school athletics compared to the major college and professional levels, you will conclude that the older the athlete is, the more immature that person is allowed to behave.

Routinely, high school athletes will be penalized and ejected from contests for antics that are praised and emulated at higher levels. This is to the everlasting credit of those who lead, coach, officiate, participate in, and watch interscholastic athletics. It is this challenge that the contrast between educational athletics and so-called higher levels become even more obvious as we raise the standards of what is expected and tolerated in school sportsmanship.

The problem of decaying sportsmanship at all levels of competition is a major concern that needs to be addressed. Misconduct in athletics is a high profile reflection of the general acceptance of disrespect in society. It is a social problem and sports are a microcosm of that problem.

The Principal's Committee on Athletics passed a recommendation of the Sportsmanship Committee to broaden the definition of "taunting" and make it a disqualifying foul in all sports. As a result, officials will be expected to eject players and bench personnel (*including coaches*) for taunting; and the Rhode Island Interscholastic League tournament supervisors will be expected to eject from the premises any spectator who engages in taunting.

**The definition of taunting is this:**

*“Any actions or comments by coaches, players, or spectators which are intended to bait, anger, embarrass, ridicule, or demean others, whether or not the deeds or words are vulgar or racist. Included is conduct that berates, needles, intimidates or threatens based on race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, or background, and conduct that attacks religious beliefs, size, economic status, speech, family, special needs or personal matters.”*

Examples of taunting by coaches, players or spectators include:

Any form of “Trash Talk”  
Ethnic or racial slurs  
Physical intimidation outside the spirit of the game  
References to sexual orientation  
“In the face” confrontation by one player to another  
Standing over or straddling a tackled or fallen player  
**PLEASE REFER TO THE RIIL TAUNTING POLICY**

Noticeable improvement in school sportsmanship will require concerted effort.

Good sports don’t need to wait for other’s actions. Good sports already know what is offensive, and what has no more place in school sports than it would have in a school classroom.

This is educational athletics. We must maintain the highest education standards in all facets of the athletic arena.

- B. OFFICIALS** who are assigned to Rhode Island Interscholastic League contests must enforce the rules regarding sportsmanship without tolerance for abuse. The only warning to participants and coaches regarding sportsmanship should come at the beginning of the contest. Once the contest begins, penalties, not warnings, must be assessed for unsportsmanlike conduct. The Rhode Island Interscholastic League expects that officials will eject any coach who protests an unsportsmanlike conduct call provided by the rules of the sport.

Each official at a Rhode Island Interscholastic League sponsored event will be provided with a card with the following statement which must read to the **All Team Members** at every contest prior to the beginning of the contest:

*“The Rhode Island Interscholastic League requires Officials to enforce all Rules regarding unsportsmanlike conduct by coaches and players. There will be no tolerance for negative statements or actions between opposing players, especially trash-talking, taunting, or baiting of opponents. If such comments are heard, a penalty will be assessed immediately. We have been instructed not to issue warnings during the contest. It is strongly suggested that you remind your participants of this policy.”*

**Section 3:** The following expectations are designed to serve as a guide for member schools and leagues in developing their sportsmanship standards and to define responsibilities.

**A. School Administration**

The RIIL PCOA recognizes that the principal is the final authority responsible for all athletic activity of his/her school at all levels of competition. The administration must take a leadership role in developing standards for their school and league and in articulating those standards to their entire school community.

1. The PCOA expects all member schools and leagues (whether one sport or multi-sport) to develop, approve, and implement a league-wide code of sportsmanship for athletes, coaches, cheerleaders, and spectators. The code should be based upon and consistent with the standards of sportsmanship developed by the RIIL (see RIIL Sportsmanship Manual for samples).
2. All member schools, as a minimum, adopt their league’s sportsmanship code as the school’s sportsmanship code. Member schools are encouraged to expand the basic league sportsmanship code to further meet their needs.
3. League and school sportsmanship codes specifically and directly state the requirement for all athletes, coaches, cheerleaders, and spectators as well as the acceptable conduct to which each will be held.

4. League and school sportsmanship codes specifically state expectations: respect for the decisions of game officials and coaches, no taunting, profanity, derogatory language or gestures, no epithets, etc.
5. League sportsmanship codes specifically state the penalties that will occur when an individual fails to adhere to the sportsmanship code.
6. The code be as widely disseminated as possible using the student-parent handbook, student-athlete handbook, school newspaper, parent newsletter, school web site and the local media.
7. The sportsmanship code for spectators be read by PA announcers prior to each contest.
8. The sportsmanship code(s) of conduct be prominently posted at all sports venues.
9. When event programs are provided, the sportsmanship code be included.
10. Member schools work with community officials to insure that levels of good sportsmanship are enforced when contests are held at their school and at non-school facilities.
11. The RIIL PCOA insists that rules of good sportsmanship be rigorously enforced at all regular season contests and at all regular tournament contests. This is particularly important when contests are held at non-school sites.
12. Schools will conduct a pre-season meeting with student athletes, coaches and parents to review the athletic standards for sportsmanship for the school and league.
13. Member schools require having athletes, parents/guardians, sign an acknowledgment which would show that they have read the student-athlete handbook and understand the sportsmanship code, rules of the school and team and RIIL eligibility requirements.
14. Inform school who will be representing the school at away events.
15. Send letter to parents, student-athletes, students, cheerleaders, coaches, spectators and the media emphasizing the need to support school athletic events and promote the principals of good sportsmanship (see RIIL Sportsmanship Manual for sample letter.) Please refer to the RIIL Sportsmanship Manual for the entire list.

**B. Athletic Administration**

The athletic director is the person responsible for the implementation of the school league sportsmanship effort. The athletic director must be aware they are the leader of all athletic events and the behavior of coaches, players, and spectators is their direct responsibility. Sportsmanship is enhanced when the athletic event is well organized and supervised.

1. Follow the Guidelines for Security, Safety and Crowd Control found in the RIIL Manual for Tournament Operations.
2. Make available to visiting schools necessary game information, include directions for parking, location of ticket booths, seating arrangement, ticket prices, game time, directions for reach game site.
3. Designate specific seating areas for students, bands, adults and visitors. If possible, opposing student bodies should be separated.
4. Arrange for adequate police supervision.
5. Post in plain site at the entrance to the field, track, pool or gymnasium a copy of the causes for expulsion from the contest, e.g., use of alcohol, drugs, throwing objects, unruly behavior.
6. If possible, assign officials to dressing facilities separated from both teams. Provide escorts for the officials when it appears that disturbances may develop.

7. To prevent long lines, assure extra help at concession stands during half-time and at breaks.
8. Take measures to prevent fans from getting near or on the playing area and around the players benches. After the contest prevent fans from going onto the playing area.
9. Provide for adequate supervision of students and facilities. Supervisors should sit in the stands with the students.
10. Direct the route for movement of all visiting school busses and all home team busses. (Include band, pep clubs, etc.)
11. Inform visiting school where they are to park busses.
12. Have the PA announcer give the location of rest rooms, concession stands and the lost and found.
13. Provides a first aid area for emergencies. Assure access to a telephone from the contest area.
14. Provide reserved parking and has a host to greet the officials when they arrive at the site.
15. Eliminate from the gymnasium during the regular season – banners, signs, noisemakers, bugles, etc. These tend to be offensive and negative in tone and cause hard feelings. (Note: The RIIL does not permit banners, signs, noisemakers, bugles, etc., at all games).
16. Do not permit all of the lights to be turned off for such things as the introduction of players or special pre-game and half time shows. Make sure there is sufficient lighting necessary to provide good crowd control for the spectators' safety.
17. Insist that unruly spectators be removed from the premises. Take legal action against those who are guilty of assault or disturbing the peace.
18. Encourage non-high school age students to attend high school athletic contests with an adult.

### **C. The Coach**

The coach plays a critical role in supporting and enhancing good sportsmanship. The coach must accept primary responsibility for the behavior and actions of his/her players and assistant coaches. The coach serves as a role model for his/her players, their parents and the spectators. The coach must always be in control, practice sound values and ethics and always pursue victory with honor.

1. Will model ethics and sportsmanship, always pursue victory with honor and maintain dignity and self-control.
2. Shall stay informed about sound coaching techniques and the physical, mental, and emotional development of the student-athlete.
3. Will teach players the rules of the game and to respect the game, officials, and opponents and will take action when athletes exhibit poor sportsmanship.
4. Will place the academic, emotional, physical and moral well being of student-athletes above desires and pressures to win.
5. Will be an ambassador for sport among athletes, schools, families and the community.
6. Will abide by the rules of the game and RIIL in letter and spirit.
7. Shall exemplify high moral character, behavior and leadership, lead by example and set a standard for players and spectators to follow.
8. Will respect the integrity and judgment of game officials.

**D. The Student-Athlete**

As members of their team, a student athlete serves as a role model. They are admired and respected by many, including younger athletes and their behavior and actions often have a significant impact on others. The student athlete plays an essential role in the promotion of sportsmanship and they must accept the responsibility to always display high standards of sportsmanship.

1. Will accept the responsibility and privilege the student-athlete has in representing their school and community by learning and showing teamwork, sportsmanship and discipline in all aspects of the game.
2. Will demonstrate respect for self, coach, teammates, opponents, officials and spectators by exhibiting good character and conducting themselves as a positive role model.
3. Will win and lose graciously.
4. Will have a thorough knowledge of and abide by all rules of the game and RIIL.
5. Will work for the good of the team at all times.
6. Will cheer for your team, not against your opponent.
7. Will congratulate opponents in a sincere manner following either victory or defeat.
8. Will refrain from the use of illegal or unhealthy substances to gain an unfair advantage.

**E. The Official**

The official is responsible for assuring the safety of the players, the management of the contest and the enforcement of sportsmanship standards during the game. By controlling the game and demanding that sportsmanship standards be followed by players and coaches they enhance the event and defuse inappropriate behavior by everyone, especially the spectators.

1. Will be fair and impartial at all times.
2. Will keep calm and poised and will not exhibit emotions or argue with players or coaches when enforcing a rule.
3. Will encourage and enforce good sportsmanship and understand his or her role in controlling not only the game, but also the safety and welfare of players and the contest environment.
4. Will be fully knowledgeable of the rules of the game.
5. Will not tolerate unsportsmanlike behavior on the part of players or coaches before, during or after the game. Fighting and unsportsmanlike penalties will be within the authority of the officials at all times at the contest site.
6. Will demonstrate positive support of all players, coaches, fellow officials and athletic administrators at all times.
7. Will accept their role in an unassuming manner.

**F. The Parent/Spectator**

Controlling parent and spectator behavior at games is proving to be a major challenge for school and athletic administrators. Leagues and schools that have well defined standards for sportsmanship that are discussed with parents at pre-season meetings and announced at game sites experience more positive behavior at games.

1. Will respect the integrity and judgment of game officials.
2. Will be respectful of all players, coaches, officials and other spectators.

3. Will never target anyone for abuse whether it be physical, verbal or emotional.
4. Will never engage in name calling, taunting, harassment, obscenities, and any other disrespectful language or gestures.
5. Will always be a positive role model for other spectators and your child.
6. Will cheer for your team, not against your opponent.
7. Will make an effort to know and understand the rules of the game.
8. Will recognize that attending a middle or high school athletic contest is a privilege, not a license to verbally assault officials, coaches or opposing team(s) and their spectators.
9. Will recognize and show appreciation for an outstanding play by either team.

#### **G. Cheerleaders and Other Spirit Groups**

All spirit groups including pep bands share the responsibility of promoting sportsmanship at games and events. They must always represent their school in a positive way and show respect for their opponents, their fans and the officials. Spirit groups have a tremendous impact on the atmosphere at the game and have a big influence on the behavior of the fans. They must accept and demonstrate their responsibility to promote good sportsmanship.

1. Will cheer for you team, not against your opponent.
2. Will know the contest rules and cheer/play at proper times.
3. Will who respect for opposing cheerleaders/bands.
4. Will lead positive cheers which praise your team without antagonizing the opponents.
5. Will show respect at all times for officials, opponents and spectators.
6. Will establish themselves as leaders in their conduct before, during and after contests and events.
7. Will conduct themselves in an exemplary manner as representative of their school, both home and away.

#### **H. The Announcer**

The announcer plays a major role in supporting sportsmanship at all events. The announcer should remain impartial, never be critical of officials or others and be aware of their influence over the tone of the contest.

1. The game announcer must not show favoritism; must use proper language at all times; be enthusiastic, but keep calm.
2. Let no one except those in charge of the event use the microphone. The announcer is responsible for any remarks made into the mike.
3. The announcer must never criticize an official's decision.
4. The announcer should explain the procedure for pre-game introductions.
5. The announcer should explain to the spectator that the cheerleaders have established a schedule of rotation of floor cheers (basketball games).
6. The announcer should explain state and conference rules and regulations.
7. The announcer should be aware of what is going on I the stadium/gym/pool so that directions can be given calmly in an emergency. Serious situations can be avoided if the announcer will caution the crowd against coming down to the field/floor/deck, throwing things, or causing other disturbances. (Please refer to game announcements in the RIIL Sportsmanship Manual.)