

*****FINALIST *****

**FOR THE 7TH ANNUAL MIAA STUDENT SPORTSMANSHIP ESSAY CONTEST AS VOTED
BY THE MIAA SPORTSMANSHIP COMMITTEE (OUT OF 300 PLUS ENTRIES)**

What Does Sportsmanship Mean To Me?

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Talent is an athlete's ability to perform, but the demonstration of Sportsmanship allows us to catch a glimpse of the heart and soul of an athlete. To me, sportsmanship means the embodiment of good character, both on and off the field.

Sportsmanship encompasses respecting the opponent competing alongside you – whether it is the two of you fighting for that loose ball on the court, ferociously volleying the ball for that last point in a tennis match or sprinting the last lap of the race to clinch first place. It is these athletes who recognize the effort and heart that their opponents have put forth against them, who have risen to the occasion and exhibit a higher level of character.

In today's wide world of sports, sportsmanship has been put on the back burner. The limelight is now continually shined upon the victories, the fame, the money and the success of superstars. In turn, these superficial ideals are having a negative impact on the people who matter the most, our youth. For example, each summer I work at The Tomorrow's Stars Basketball Camp in Franklin, Massachusetts and unlike your typical summer camp, our focus goes beyond the game of basketball. At the closing of each day, the 150 or so kids meet in the center circle as their parents file in to pick them up at 3:30 pm. But before dismissal "Coach Edge" uses the acronym "**P.R.I.D.E**" to stress the importance of all around good character to the campers.

On Monday we discuss **P**ositive mental attitudes, on Tuesday - **R**espect and respecting others, on Wednesday - **I**ntelligent choices, on Thursday - **D**reams and goals and on Friday **E**ducation and effort. And no matter how late we are running behind, we never skip over our end of the day discussion, because it is important to Coach Edge to get the point across to these kids, that there is more to an athlete than talent alone. The other part of the package of an athlete is sportsmanship and sportsmanship an element of commendable character.

The camp is titled “Tomorrow’s Stars” for a reason. Coach Edge realizes, as the rest of us should, that the youth of our society is also the future and so he reaches out to them. They truly are “Tomorrow’s Stars”. And out of the 600 kids that will come through the camp each summer, maybe only a handful will play high school sports, even fewer will play in college, and maybe only one or two will move on professionally, if any. As for the rest of them? They will become doctors, lawyers, teachers, coaches, businessmen and women - you name it. But no matter what they grow up to be, they will be able to use what they have learned about sportsmanship and exhibiting respectable character and apply it to their lives.

I define sportsmanship as the possession of worthy character, which to me, is an irreplaceable aspect of life.