

Sportsmanship

Jonathan Luders

NBA champion, Walt Frazier said, "*The star player must slay his ego and learn teamwork and communication skills before he can achieve the ultimate in sport.*" These words sum up the definition of sportsmanship in my mind. To "*slay his ego*" means total respect for the game and the realization that no one player is ever greater than the game itself. This is the humbling thought that no matter how good I think I am, there is always someone better. I must work hard to improve myself and to be the best sportsman that I can be every day by keeping my ego in check.

As a captain in both baseball and soccer, I understand that strong teamwork and communication skills are essential for "*the ultimate in sport.*" My job as captain is not only to be the best leader and sportsman I can be, it's to motivate my teammates to believe in themselves and each other so that *they* can be the best players they can be. I try to model the words of legendary UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden, "*...when a game is over, and you see somebody that didn't know the outcome, I hope they couldn't tell by your actions whether you outscored an opponent or the opponent outscored you.*" The only thing I can control is my actions before, during, and after the game. My goal is that my actions communicate to my teammates how the game should be played. In my eyes, that is sprinting on and off the field, diving for that ball that no one thought could be caught, and helping up an opposing player who has taken a fall. I noticed that sometimes when teams line up to shake hands, players say "good game" without the greatest intentions, for example, when the score was 7-0. To the losing team, it might not have been a "good game" and they probably don't want to hear those words. Instead, I say "Respect" because that is something players can relate to if they played the game hard and in the right way. When I lead by these examples and give my best, my teammates do the same.

True sportsmanship goes beyond the game. It carries over to the rest of my life and will transfer to my future endeavors, as I know I'll be a man out in the world longer than I'll be an athlete on the field. I believe sportsmanship in the real world is a matter of respecting everyone, being scrupulously honest, genuinely humble, and hardworking because each of these qualities is a key to success in today's world. Sportsmanship is when you do the very best you can, every day on the field, in the classroom, or at work because not only are you being the best version of yourself, you are bettering all those around you by raising the level of play and making the environment where you work or play that much better.