



22nd Annual Student Sportsmanship Essay/Multimedia Contest

**How do courageous leaders
demonstrate sportsmanship?**

*A collection of finalist and honorable
mention essays submitted by students
from MIAA member schools*





“How do courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship?”

This book represents the winners and finalist entries in the 22nd Annual MIAA Student Sportsmanship Essay/Multimedia Contest as voted by the MIAA Sportsmanship Committee.

Multimedia Category

First Place

Grace Glover and Reuben Nyasani
Nashoba Regional High School

Runner Up

Destiny Ortiz
Agawam High School

Literary Category

First Place

McKinley Chabot
Oakmont Regional High School

Runner Up

Ella Bradshaw
Notre Dame Academy ~ Worcester

Literary First Place

Courageous Leaders: The Secret to Success

McKinley Chabot

Oakmont Regional High School

Courageous leaders are the purest example of what sports are all about. They don't get their status by simple luck, or coincidence. They get to where they are by working hard, and never giving up. Courageous leaders put everything they have into everything they do, both in and out of their event. Most importantly, courageous leaders have stellar sportsmanship.

Courageous leaders prioritize kindness. As a runner, I recognize these people as the ones who wish you luck on the starting line. These people may be crippled with anxiousness, or trying to take home the win, but they still find it in their hearts to say these impactful words. A simple sentence can help ease nerves, and courageous leaders recognize that. This, to me at least, makes a true champion.

No matter how their race or game goes, courageous leaders will congratulate you at the end. Whether it's a fist bump, a high five, or even just a smile and thumbs up, they want to make you happy. It may take all of their strength and pride, but they do it regardless. Courageous leaders recognize their defeat, and use it to improve themselves. Rather than being upset or blaming the better person, they work harder and try again the next time.

Courageous leaders cheer for everyone. It doesn't matter what team a person is on, or what place they get, these people will scream until all breath is lost. They will help the underdog across the finish line through words of encouragement. They will jump up and down when someone runs a personal best. Courageous leaders are the ones who show up even when they're injured, just so they can cheer everyone on. It may break their heart to see others able to participate, but they push past this and come out to support.

Courageous leaders make everyone's voice heard. They step out of their comfort zone, and go out of their way to talk to everyone. If they recognize someone who feels like an outsider, they will do their best to make them feel included. They will try to find common ground with a person, or suggest some team-bonding activities. Courageous leaders are strong enough to speak up for themselves and others. They have the power to spread positivity across a team.

Above all, courageous leaders inspire others. Their sportsman-like behavior prompts others to follow suit, and creates the next generation of leaders. They are the role models for everyone else on a team; the ones that everyone looks up to. They bring others up with them, through their spirit and unwavering strength. These people, these truly incredible people, are the reason why sports are so loved today.

Literary Runner Up

Leading with Grit and Grace

Ella Bradshaw

Notre Dame Academy - Worcester

When asked to think of a leader, does a friend, a competitor, or a captain come to mind? Could a leader embody all of these characteristics? As a captain of my varsity basketball team, I personally try to fit all of these personas. To support, to challenge, and to instruct are my roles. As any good leader, I take an equitable approach to guiding my teammates. There are certain prerequisites of a role of a player on a team, whether it be age, skill level, or personality. Though these ranks on any program are important in recognition of athletic performance, a good leader embraces the diversity of the unique humans in their program. When I think of myself as a leader, whether it be on the basketball court, in the classroom, or in my community service, I like to think that I take these skills into action. As a mentor at a senior military college once told me, "leaders are not born but created". It does not require a born instinct to create impact, but instead heart and effort. So become a friend, become a competitor, become a captain, and become a leader.

And how about sportsmanship? Sportsmanship is more than just shaking hands with opponents after a game or taking a knee when another player is injured. As an athlete, sportsmanship means to be kind in the face of competition. To show gratitude for the presence and talents of your rivals, to be thankful to have the opportunity to play and enjoy the emotion of sports. My mother has always told me to play with "grit and grace". When I hear this expression, I think of how perfectly it embodies the definition of sportsmanship. To face adversity with a competitive mindset, but a kind heart. In my game, I practice sportsmanship by learning the names of my referees, by helping my opponents up if they fall, and by playing my best game through my actions instead of words of complaint or frustration.

Of course it is important to understand the elements of both leadership and sportsmanship, but it is arguably more crucial to recognize how they are intertwined. Sportsmanship, arguably the most important aspect of any game, cannot exist without strong, courageous leaders. Good captains and good teammates take action to lead by example. And good leaders practice commendable sportsmanship by acting with "grit and grace".

How do courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship?

*Allyson Bligh
Ursuline Academy*

Unspoken leadership is the true courageous feat that can demonstrate sportsmanship in the most unlikely, yet effective, ways. Leadership and courage sift into one thing: trust. Trust in your coaches, teammates, hard work, and that not being the loudest person in the room can speak the most value. As a quiet person myself, I often go unnoticed in classrooms. However, in Irish dance competitions, I am able to go on stage and compete with seven of my teammates in front of thousands because of the trust we have built with each other and the leadership role we all play a crucial part in.

One of the most influential people in history, Albert Einstein, said “Strive not to be a success, but to be of value.”. For the majority of my dance career, I have based the worth of my artistry off of the outcome of competition. I prided myself on the highest score or trophy before I realized that the definition of success is what I make it. Now, my definition of success is leading my Irish dance ceili teams with courage and demonstrating sportsmanship through my actions, not always my words. In my ceili, or team dance, made up of seven of my closest friends, I have learned to embrace their ideas and truly listen. I have found that when a leader is courageous enough to stand down and share the leadership role, the team succeeds not only in competition, but more importantly in trusting and respecting each other. To me, this is the way a true courageous leader shows their sportsmanship. My peers began to value this, as well. It made the team functional and a true team: a group coming together to reach a common goal. The most courageous leaders are confident enough to not need to be in charge constantly, but sometimes have their actions speak for them, making them a definition of sportsmanship the Merriam Webster Dictionary would be proud of.

Sportsmanship is what determines a winner outside of the competition or game. A true team player is confident enough to share in the leadership role and trust their teammates. Without being a team player or embodying the qualities of sportsmanship, what is the point of a competition or game? Through sportsmanship, people can learn the true meaning and values of being a part of a team.

How do courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship?

Gabriel Fernandes

Somerset Berkley Regional High School

Sportsmanship, it's the thing we are constantly reminded most about on the field, sideline and especially on the long car ride home. Whether it is from our coaches, parents, or officials, it is consistently reinforced by the people who surround us. But, what is sportsmanship? Is it shaking hands at the end of the game, respecting the officials, or cleaning up the bench after an away game? Webster's dictionary defines sportsmanship as 'conduct such as fairness, respect for one's opponent, and graciousness in winning or losing while becoming one participating in a sport'. However, I believe sportsmanship is much more than that.

As one of the senior captains of my girls high school soccer team, individual and team sportsmanship is always on my radar. Captains and team leaders must be aware of their teammates actions, but also, be aware of their own actions. While it is easier to notice the lack of sportsmanship of others, courageous leaders must recognize the lack of sportsmanship that they display as well. However, courageous leaders are also human beings, and everyone has a bad game race once in a while. Good and poor sportsmanship is often recognized through repeated patterns. Many athletes fail to recognize poor sportsmanship within themselves, whether it is due to a bad game or even outside factors. Furthermore, good leaders demonstrate sportsmanship through self-sacrifice. Courageous leaders must know when to put one's own needs behind, in order to benefit the rest of the team. Courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship when they are able to work with others, despite disagreements. Whether it is another teammate, a coach, or an official, these leaders must display good sportsmanship for the greater good of the group. For example, after a bad game, courageous leaders are able to show aspects of sportsmanship by shaking hands despite being frustrated with the end result. Leaders have major influence on others, therefore as courageous leaders show sportsmanship, others will follow. In addition, a small way courageous leaders can demonstrate sportsmanship is by simply having a positive attitude. Small acts of kindness or even congratulating others on small accomplishments, is a small but effective way in which courageous leaders can display sportsmanship. However, a common misconception about sportsmanship is that it can be only found on the field, track, pool, court or any field of play. Courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship before, after and during the game. Sportsmanship can be seen walking onto the field, and walking off. Leaders establish a sense of sportsmanship often, but courageous leaders establish sportsmanship continuously.

Overall, sportsmanship does not have a single definition. Sportsmanship can be whatever you think it is. Whether it is small acts of kindness, respecting others, or cleaning up trash, sportsmanship can be seen in many different forms. As I reflect, I now understand how sportsmanship requires courage, bravery and determination. Sportsmanship is possible for everyone, regardless of being a courageous leader, spectator, or official.

Sportsmanship Essay
Juelz Soria
Diman Regional Voc/Tech High School

In the journey I've taken in my life, I can say that athletics has provided me opportunities for growth as a student, gaining a sense of control, building positive relationships, and developing leadership skills. In my early life, I didn't have many opportunities. When I was with my biological family, sports were not even a consideration. I always had an interest and skill in sports, but it was never an option for me. At age 9, I ended up in the foster care system. I didn't get involved in athletics until I was 12 years old. By that point, I wasn't making the best choices for my own life. My life was so up in the air I just couldn't grasp a sense of regulation. Until my adopted mom came into my life and gave me a feeling of hope and permanency. Life now is controlled and predictable.

As a student, I was not interested in learning and had many problems with my grades and conduct. Athletics changed that because it gave me something to look forward to after school and gave me something to be accountable for. There was a point when I was out of control of emotions, behaviors, and feelings. I felt like I was out of control because I couldn't make any decisions about my life. Now as an athlete, a son, and a captain of a team I have a sense of control. I used to crave attention because that was something that was not given to me. Now, as a student-athlete, I get positive attention and people to guide me. Seeing the people who care about me in the stands makes me feel important and seen.

Before athletics, my peer relationships were a problem. I chose to hang out with people who didn't care about their future and who made poor decisions. I always found myself in trouble and was becoming one of those people. Peer relationships are now positive. Now I choose to hang out with people who want to be successful and who are leaders. In my early life, things were unpredictable. There was no sense of leadership or positive role models. When I was given the chance to do sports I took complete advantage of leadership opportunities. Coming from having no opportunities to being a captain of a soccer team showed me that I can be a leader, I can have a sense of control, and I have something positive to offer. By being a good sport and a positive leader, I learned respect for others and self-control. Most importantly, I learned leadership. These skills helped me manage many other parts of my life such as, how I talk to people, and how I present myself.

As I look back at the journey I have taken, there are many people and things that have influenced the path I am now on. Athletics certainly positively impacted my life. I have found courage, and the ability to become a courageous leader through athletics.

How Leaders Exemplify Sportsmanship

*Arush Sharma
Ashland High School*

Accomplished baseball player Cal Ripken Jr. commented, "... sportsmanship is a little bit forgotten in place of the individual attention". Ripken highlights that many fail to realize the purpose of sportsmanship; being a "good sport" is not defined by your direct actions, but also by your poise and gesture towards your peers. In today's day and age, it seems that many players attempt to garner "individual attention" even if it comes at the stake of sportsmanship. However, courageous leaders often disregard this self-interest for the betterment of their teammates, and consequently, this trust which is gained from their role often translates into an academic and social atmosphere.

Tennis is a sport that is dominated by individual performances and thus, attention. These players are often playing by themselves or along with one other person. This heavy burden where players can not directly rely on their entire team can leave them to become egotistical in their performances to a point where they forget about the player across the court from them. Though I am not the best tennis player in my state, region, or even my school, I constantly make my voice heard as a courageous leader who embodies a positive mindset. As a leader on the tennis team, I vow to make sure that "sportsmanship [is not] forgotten" throughout our team. It is my basic responsibility to uplift my teammates for their best individual performances while reminding them of the importance of togetherness. When it comes to winning or losing, I hope to convey to other members of the team that those labels are pointless if you do not respect your teammates, your opponents, or the game itself.

Furthermore, I am able to demonstrate my leadership skills in the classroom by respecting my classmates and creating a safe environment where conversations can be emboldened without discouragement. I strive to make an effort to lead by example at school by doing simple gestures such as respecting classroom etiquette and establishing a goal-oriented mindset based on teamwork. This demonstrates that sportsmanship is practiced in many aspects of life and attempting to establish yourself as a leader can perpetuate the spread of sportsmanship in the community.

One idea of sportsmanship that I recently opened my eyes to is how critical the spread of the concept is. I did not automatically become a leader of my tennis team; instead, I learned how elder, established leaders signified the importance of positivity, respect, and humility. This demonstrates that leaders should have the eagerness to absorb ideas, but also be able to communicate them to others to make a practical impact. Being a leader allows one to be a model for their community and create an environment where the purpose of sportsmanship is prioritized and spread to others.

Sportsmanship
Gracey Gorman
Whitman-Hanson Regional High School

How do courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship? Well let's break it down, what is a courageous leader? To me, a courageous leader isn't just someone who people look up to and follow but it means you act even in the face of uncertainty, doubt, fear, and many more overwhelming obstacles. This means for an example if you are in the stands at a football game with your school and your whole school is booing and not acting like leaders and representing your school well you have the courage to stand up and say that's not who we are or want to be. Courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship by speaking out and going that extra mile.

I feel so fortunate that I got to see and shadow not just a great player but a great leader in our program that taught me first hand how to be a strong courageous leader. She would go the extra mile to stay after and help other kids struggling on the team or be the last one off the court at the end of a long game to make sure every piece of trash is picked up. No matter how the game went she reassured all her teammates how amazing they are and how well they played. People looked up to her because of the positivity and energy she brought to the team. I try my hardest to be the leader she was and carry that energy throughout our program like she did. She inspired so many people and I think she is a great example of a courageous leader with extraordinary sportsmanship.

John Quincy Adams once said, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." And I think he is 100% right pushing people to do and be better is a huge part about being a great leader. I think some of the best leaders demonstrate sportsmanship when they are just being themselves which I think says a lot about a person, and who they truly are.

How do courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship?

Divya Siddi

Westwood High School

What is the true meaning of being a leader? The answer may vary for many, but the reality of the definition has always been the same. A strong, respectful, fair, and open-minded person that doesn't supervise their group but instead helps his/her companions pave their path to success. It's important to present such leadership in different places, especially in sportsmanship. Playing on the field or court while all players face immense physical and mental pressure is not an easy ground to engage in. A leader here is a key requirement to keep the team up and going. They don't command them and tell their players what to do but compare and merge ideas to create a plan unanimously for their strategies. A leader's role is also crucial during a loss. Out of everyone, a leader should understand most of how much playing the sport means to each individual. When the team loses in a competition in their meaningful activity the leader is the ray of light during their gloomy and undetermined period of devastation. Courageousness and hopefulness are what are meant to be planted by a leader and have their mind set on knowing that their next opportunity can be molded better. Standing by their side and telling them optimistic confidence boosters such as "Good try!" or "Don't worry, you'll get it next time!" lightens up the mood and allows the players to flush out their anxiety and worried thoughts. Being a representative of the team but also a competitor means that ethical behavior is a pivotal characteristic for the leader and the team. A game is meant to be played respectfully and diligently but competition should never have the meaning of 'despising the other team'. A competition is a ground where two teams display their sportsmanship and skills to bring victory at the end. Arguing with the referee and yelling disrespectful comments is nowhere near the character of an ideal competitor. Take the situation where in a soccer game a foul is announced. Arguing with the referee would make the player look more vulgar, which is why accepting the mistake, in that case, is another great quality of sportsmanship to demonstrate fairness. The purpose of the game could be different for each player but in the means of competition, the focus should rather be on winning for the team and working together rather than putting down the opposing team and being an impolite fellow sports player. Personally, although my major interest isn't in sports, taking in these great qualities will also help me develop my mindset and create better outcomes. Striving to become a leader by incorporating the few of many traits in sportsmanship inspires other players to develop such attributes and become better teammates that the team can trust and rely on, to work together and make a dream turn into reality. Just as Martin Luther King Jr. said, "A genuine leader isn't a searcher for consensus, but a molder of consensus."

How do courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship?

*Timothy Mullen
Methuen High School*

In sports, many people can be labeled as leaders, but the ones who trump all are those that portray courageousness through sportsmanship. Many may say that there are great acts of sportsmanship all around but some stand out more than others.

In my years of baseball at Methuen High School, one player always showed his courageousness through his unbelievable sportsmanship. He is nothing but a selfless person and always wants what's best for not only himself but more importantly the team. My friend and teammate, Wesley, was often seen giving tips to underclassmen that he would use himself. The fact that he would share information that he values and uses to better himself shows his sportsmanship in itself. His compassion for the team was never hard to find and it genuinely showed his true character. His openness and willingness to help others on the team were proof that he was selfless and cared about the team's well-being. Additionally, not only did he care for the team but he also showed the utmost respect to opposing teams. Anytime an opposing player had a successful game he was always the first to congratulate them and ask about their knowledge of the game. It takes confidence and respect to do what he would do after the games and those are the two things Wesley sure had. He had the understanding that once the game was over we were all the same, no longer competing, and just athletes on a field. His ability to look at an opposing player as just another one of his teammates is what made him courageous.

On one particular night, Wesley did something that I had seen no other athlete do before. This particular night had horrible conditions; rain, wind, and cold temperature all played factors in the challenge ahead of us. Wesley went out there and battled on the mound against Billerica. Not only was Wesley facing harsh weather conditions but he was faced with constant heckling from Billerica's bench. Despite the heckling, he fought through the night and ended up pitching one heck of a game. It was not only what Wesley accomplished during the game that stood out, but it was rather what he did after that shocked me. As we were wrapping up and as Billerica was leaving, Wesley walked up to the opposing team and started talking to them about the game. No negative comments were exchanged but rather positive remarks on each player's performance. Even though they were disrespectful to him, he dared to approach them and be the good sport that he is. It takes a lot to compose yourself and become the bigger person in that situation and that's exactly what he did.

Because of Wesley's actions, other people looked up to him and learned from him. I have personally improved by watching Wesley both on and off the field as he exudes sportsmanship on and off the field.

Sportsmanship
Alma Mayorga Perdomo
Methuen High School

How does a courageous leader show sportsmanship? Politically speaking, it is someone who is honest as to what they stand for. Sports-wise, it is the person that doesn't just play the game but is the person who encourages others to give it their all and love what they are doing. Courageous leaders who show sportsmanship keep their composure and make the best calls for the team. They are those that help the underdog and learn from their mistakes as well, they are the person that has to make the toughest calls.

A leader who shows sportsmanship that I really admire is Lionel Messi. Not only was he considered the underdog, but he also proved to himself and others that he was capable of being great. He is someone that I admire because not only is he one of the greatest soccer players, his forthcoming and his way to the major leagues is something that I admire. In and out of the field, we can see the humility he shows to others. Yes, soccer can be overdramatic at times but the way he reacts to the other players says much more about his character than he could say himself. Actions speak louder than words and when players are on the field it can be easy to get caught in the motion. However, what makes the difference is the player that knows how to keep their composure and reassure others.

A team tends to have a leader or someone they rely on. This can be hard sometimes when the pressure is on you to make the right calls. I believe that when you listen to your teammates and take into consideration what everyone has to say, you are someone that makes your teammates equally matter. Courageous means to do something out of the ordinary with a great amount of valor, I think that this is seen in all sports by the coaches. A coach is a person that helps the team stay together, they are the mentors that value the growth of their team. This sometimes means that they also have to make the toughest decisions and sometimes tend to be overlooked.

A leader such as a coach shows wisdom and love to a sport or team; even if they can't physically take part in it. They show great leadership skills and sportsmanship with other coaches as they vouch for their teams and try to learn from others to make their teams grow. Sportsmanship between coaches means that they will always do the right thing even if others may not agree or see the bigger picture. Whether someone is in or out of the field, they show sportsmanship by the way they react to hard situations and plays.

Courageous leaders show sportsmanship by the way they react to their opponents, their sense of doing what is best for the team, and being a mentor.

How do courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship?

Emily Barrett

Nashoba Regional High School

Courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship by fearlessly standing up against unsportsmanlike conduct. They are willing to speak up to opponents, teammates, spectators, and even coaches when they show unfair or nasty behavior. Leaders also encourage their teammates and peers to do the same. They will not back down from people who may not agree with their values.

A person must have a few key values to be a successful and respectable leader. These values include boldness, fearlessness, fairness, and kindness. A leader should value being kind to their team, opponents, referees, and coaches. Additionally, a leader believes in fairness of the game and is not afraid to stand up for their beliefs. These values match up with the principles of sportsmanship. According to Oxford Languages, sportsmanship is defined as “fair and generous behavior towards others, especially in a sports contest.” A leader demonstrates sportsmanship because they are inclined to act in a way that aligns best with their main ideologies. People are driven to exhibit their core values, so a courageous leader demonstrates sportsmanship by simply possessing the core values that a leader should have.

Oftentimes, people are afraid to speak up to their friends or teammates. They are worried about creating tension within the team. However, courageous leaders will respectfully criticize any and all unsportsmanlike conduct, even if it is being performed by a fellow teammate. Recently, I encountered a situation where a few players on one team were making unnecessary comments towards the opposing team because they were playing better and had a big lead in the game. However, it is these types of comments that can lead people to quit the sport they love. One of the players from the team that was making the unnecessary comments stepped forwards and told their teammates to stop because it wasn't funny or necessary. This is an example of a courageous leader- rising up and making themselves heard against unsportsmanlike conduct. They freely took charge and told their teammates, maybe even friends, that their behavior was wrong and unwanted.

Furthermore, sportsmanship does not stop as soon as you step off the field. Although it may not be called sportsmanship, or fit the last part of the exact definition, it extends to everyday life. Thus, a courageous leader is a role model on and off the field. A leader is compassionate and ready to help out anyone who may need it. They are fair in their everyday lives and treat others with kindness.

Coaches and players alike should be demonstrating sportsmanship on and off the field. Without sportsmanship, sports become dysfunctional and not fun. Courageous leaders will fearlessly demonstrate sportsmanship by possessing the values of an exceptional leader, standing up to anyone, even if they are a friend or a teammate, and being fair and considerate on and off the field. Courageous leaders are essential to competitive sports, and everyday life.

How do courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship?

Lindsay Wilson

Notre Dame Academy – Hingham

The simplicity of the term "sportsmanship" is an expression all student-athletes continuously hear throughout their careers. Defined by the Cambridge dictionary, sportsmanship is "behavior in a sport that is fair and shows respect to the other players." The term "sportsmanship" is one of the most important, if not the most important, behaviors for a studentathlete to display. To demonstrate this, it is crucial for student-athletes to accept the significance of their role on a team and act with the obligation of being a leader. This obligation requires taking the initiative to exhibit fair and respectful actions, two dominant principles of sportsmanship.

Fairness, one of the prime concepts of sportsmanship, helps players enjoy the experience of their sport. It is essential for a leader to uphold rules and expectations for the safety of players and equitable competition. In the stands of a game, fairness can be shown by treating both teams with dignity. On the field, it can be shown by following the rules and respecting the officials and their decisions. Although these examples are straightforward, they can often be overlooked at times. Fairness encourages respect, trust, and leadership in a community.

Respect, another essential idea for demonstrating sportsmanship, is important to continue building upon the foundation of community. At Notre Dame Academy (Hingham), our community is built upon the idea of sisterhood. During my time here, I have learned that with sisterhood comes the value of respect. Respect inside and outside of the classroom. Respect toward each other and faculty. Simply put, respect is always due. I have been fortunate to be a part of this community, which has allowed me to understand the extent of the importance of respect. Within NDA athletics, respect is at the root of all the teams. While participating in sports at NDA, I have seen the chain effect that respect can have on teams. Examples of this can include little things like helping move a net or picking up cones. When a leader on the team does this, teammates notice and follow. It also creates an environment for underclassmen to continue to teach and carry out. Respect toward opponents is also crucial when demonstrating sportsmanship. As a very competitive person, it has taken time for me to learn that sports are so much more than just winning. In times of struggle or difficulty, when it is the hardest to demonstrate great sportsmanship, those are the moments when it is most important. These moments demonstrate true character and sportsmanship.

Expressing great sportsmanship is a valuable commodity that is often easier said than done. Sportsmanship has proved that sports are more than just a game. They allow you to represent yourself, your family, and the entire community and acquire a sense of belonging. Sports teach vital lessons that allow people to participate in what they love and enjoy. With this comes the principle of one of the most important lessons in future endeavors: great sportsmanship.

How do courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship?

*Emily Brockelman
Methuen High School*

A courageous leader isn't always somebody who is a captain of the team, or the superstar player. To me, A courageous leader is somebody who makes everyone feel included, and puts their best selves forward to make everybody feel as one.

Growing up, I was never really part of a team. I didn't stick with the sports I started, I didn't have many friends so I mainly just kept to myself. What always made me feel included was going to my family and friends sporting events and cheering them on from the sidelines. In seventh grade, I met a boy named Andon. He is a brilliant young man who could light up a room just by walking in. At the time, Andon was a three-sport athlete. His schedule was always so busy between football, basketball and baseball yet he still always made the time to see me. By the time we were freshman in high school, my mom became severely ill. She suffered from two strokes affecting both sides of her brain stem, leaving her with very little quality of life. At fourteen years old, you can only imagine how painful that was. Andon was always my number one supporter. His family immediately took me in and let me stay with them as long as I needed to and always made me feel like I was part of their family.

When it was time for the Methuen High football season to start, everything that was happening with my mom was in full swing. I would miss numerous days of school to go be with her in the hospital. Although, I always wanted to be home for the football games because it helped distract me from the reality of my mom. The first game of the year was set to take off on September 16th, 2019 against Marshfield. I went down to Marshfield with Andons mom Erica to watch him play and it was mesmerizing. Andon, a running back at the time, scored the opening touchdown of the game and continued to blow us away. When the game came to an end, the boys removed their helmets and pads and Andons shirt revealed in bright red letters "For Becky." He played for my mom that day. And although they may not have won the game against Marshfield, it was a game that was beyond memorable.

To this day, Andon is still my number one supporter. Now Andon may not be the captain of the football team, or captain of the baseball team, but there are multiple opportunities for athletes to be leaders on and off the field. I see student athletes encourage others in the classroom to speak up and get involved. A courageous leader makes everyone feel included. To me, Andon is the courageous leader that anybody would be lucky to have on their team.

How do courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship

*Aliza Grealis
Agawam High School*

How do courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship? Well, that's a tough question to answer. Courageous leaders have one goal. This goal is to not only lead their team to success, but be the best role model that they can be so that the other kids can succeed at their absolute best. I can sit here and name every single example that I have seen of courageous leaders demonstrating sportsmanship. But, I'm not going to do that. Courageous leaders can be anyone on the team. Not just a leader that people know as courageous. But, whoever this person or people are, they demonstrate sportsmanship on and off the field. These leaders know how to handle certain situations. They make sure that everyone is being treated fairly. They make sure that everyone has a shot at success. But, most importantly they make others feel praised and accomplished when no one else makes them feel like that. That other person may not get that kind of recognition at home or anywhere else. So, that one person who makes sure they are getting treated the way they should be, could lift someone's spirits just by telling them how good they did in that game. It could help someone's mental health or self-esteem by a lot. They may think very badly about themselves, or always think they're bad at everything and that gets in their head. But, just hearing it from that one person can possibly change their whole mood and they may remember for that whole day or the rest of their lives. These courageous leaders will be remembered by others forever.

They also give constructive criticism without being rude and yelling at the other person. This turns into the leader being a person that the other one may want to go to to talk to. They are also kind to refs and coaches. They don't curse, or yell or disrespect the coaches or refs. They try to understand why the coach made that play or why the refs called that penalty. They don't freak out about it because they know that there's always a better solution than that. Even outside of the game. Simply just at school or in the stands for example. They will simply just say hi or tell them how good that other person did at that game yesterday. They will try talking to the other person and won't give them a dirty look or laugh at them. Make them feel included and feel valued. Some groups on a team may feel disincluded from the other kids. That one person will always be there. Some of the traits of a courageous leader may be kind, understanding, brave, or even dependable. They aren't known as loud and cocky. Just because you're good at the sport, it doesn't mean you have good sportsmanship to say the least. So, to me a leader who demonstrates sportsmanship is probably the best person to be around and they also always make sure that everyone feels valued.

How do courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship?

*Jeydany Ortega
Methuen High School*

How do courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship? Is it by showing support and encouraging words to players? Or by giving other advice to players that will improve their performance playing sports. These are my three crucial traits that I believe every leader should have.

I believe that good leaders demonstrate sportsmanship by showing respect to both opponents and fellow players. It's very important to show respect because it will prevent conflicts that could ruin the game or even careers. Having conflict with opponents never ends well and even showing this type of reckless behavior speaks a lot about your personality and could cause you to lose lots of opportunities along the way. Leaders should show fellow players that respect should be the most important thing to show other players. Another way leaders demonstrate sportsmanship is by supporting their peers and pushing them to get better at the sport. We've all experienced thoughts of quitting because it's too hard or it's mentally draining and you feel like you're getting nowhere. But with good sportsmanship a leader can overcome all this and inspire others to keep showing up to practice, sweat a bit more, and work a bit harder to see results. Leaders should always keep players in check mentally to have a stable team. Another example of how leaders can demonstrate sportsmanship is by knowing when you're in the wrong. I believe that owning up to your mistakes can take your team a long way and in the right path. Being stubborn or having any childish traits as a leader is unacceptable. Leaders that are unable to admit to mistakes will influence others to do the same and have the whole team be under the influence of their own mistakes as well, which will cause conflicts with coaches and players.

In conclusion these are the three reasons how Leaders Demonstrate Sportsmanship. I believe that these three reasons are crucial to being the best leader to fellow peers and players.

How do courageous leaders demonstrate sportsmanship?

*Amanda Iannacone
Narragansett Regional High School*

Courageous leaders can demonstrate sportsmanship on the field of play, during interactions with officials, and in other interscholastic areas of athletics. Leaders that demonstrate sportsmanship are respectful to teammates, coaches, officials and spectators.

On the field, if an athlete gets injured, good sportsmanship is shown when the opposing players take a knee until the injured player is off the field and then everyone claps respectfully. In some instances a player could be knocked to the ground or fall during play. A courageous leader will make an effort to help the player up, even if they are on the opposing team. Another instance of showing sportsmanship would be when a player on an opposing team makes an outstanding play and the player on the other team congratulates them even though they are on opposite teams. Recognizing and acknowledging a great play, even by an opponent is a great way for a courageous leader to demonstrate great sportsmanship. Another example of courageous leadership demonstrating sportsmanship on the field of play would be when the older players on the team congratulate, help, and encourage the younger players. Leading by example, positive encouragement and constant sportsmanship teach younger players how to behave in pressure situations and how to react when the game doesn't go as planned or even how to win gracefully.

Leaders also show sportsmanship when interacting with officials. At the start of a game the leaders of each team meet with the officials, coaches and opposing team's leaders/captains. Their behavior and attitude sets the tone for the entire game. A courageous leader presents themselves with confidence, but respects everyone involved with the game. After athletic events, teams, coaches, and spectators thank officials for their efforts even if there were disagreements about calls. Other ways leaders show sportsmanship when interacting with officials is when coaches and athletes refrain from arguing with the officials when they disagree with a call.

Courageous leaders can demonstrate sportsmanship by being respectful and kind on the field of play and also when communicating and interacting with officials. They can also demonstrate sportsmanship with fans and parents by not getting caught up with crowd noise or rowdy fans. The players represent their schools and their actions reflect on their school, coaches, teammates and families.