

A Good Sport



3 Key Takeaways

— 1 —

Real winners act the same toward their opponent whether they win or lose.



— 2 —

Follow the rules and be a gracious winner and respectful loser.



— 3 —

Sportsmanship reveals true character.



The Basics

A survey conducted by TNS Worldwide Research in 2010 showed that less people thought sportsmanship was worse now versus a generation ago, the first decline in five years. This is significant as 12 years earlier ESPN reported that 81% of those surveyed believed that sportsmanship had declined at all levels.

Still, sportsmanship should continue to be monitored and emphasized by coaches at all levels of sport. Being a good sport involves striving for success while adhering to playing fair, honestly, and with respect for the rules.

Young people often learn from watching others, which also applies to being a good sport. But according to the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports (YSI), young athletes (ages 10-18) identified five different dimensions to being a good sport:

- 1. *Committing fully to sport participation***
- 2. *Respecting the rules and officials***
- 3. *Having concern for social conventions (such as being a good loser)***
- 4. *Respecting your opponents***
- 5. *Avoiding having a “win-at-all-costs” mentality***

Encouraging these behaviors and demonstrating them yourself will help create an entire team of good sports.



Team USA Modern Pentathlete, Olympian, and US Army Sergeant Izy Isaksen knows what it means to be a good sport. Eight years after her older sister and two-time Olympian, Margaux Isaksen, began competing in modern pentathlon, Izy followed her into the sport.

She soon realized that people compared the two of them. Izy would overhear spectators and teammates asking, “Who is the better athlete?” and “Who is going to beat the other?”

Instead of letting outside pressures create a negative experience for her and her sister, Izy chose to practice winning and losing with grace and respect. She acknowledged that it would have been easy to let a hyper competitive mindset affect her and her sister’s relationship but instead, they decided to support and cheer for each other regardless of their own performance.



Izy’s experience of competing against and being compared to her older sister taught her to focus on how to perform at her best, rather than putting wasted energy into wishing others to fail. Izy believes that sportsmanship reveals true character, so no matter what situation she encounters during competition, even when face-to-face with her sister, she knows it is important to always treat people with respect and be a good sport.

AMBASSADOR STORY QUESTIONS

1. *What was the main point you took away from the ambassador Story?*
2. *Can you think of a time when you felt frustrated after a loss, yet you still shook your opponent’s hand with respect and gratitude?*
3. *How can you practice good sportsmanship at practice or during your next athletic season?*