**Civility Always at Sporting Events**

**For many of us participating or watching some type of sporting event starts at an early age. From Tee ball and youth soccer to professional sports and the Olympics hundreds of games are played on community fields, high school gyms, colleges sport’s centers, and city arenas daily. I was an early observer. My father, as a high school basketball coach, took my brother and I to both football and basketball games. I know I did my share of booing the referees and players. BUT since I became a part of the Door County Civility Project, I have reframed. Further I have been ashamed of my fellow fans who have done so. Whether a player, a coach, a referee, or a fan respect, a tool of civility, needs to reign.**

**Let’s see how affective respect can be for each of these groups in promoting civility. A player recognizes their own and their teams abilities and have received information through practice about their opponent’s skills. A part of the game’s strategy is to promote the team’s strength and address the opponent’s weaknesses to force mistakes or their human imperfection. On both sides mistakes will be made and the team with the fewest wins. Shaking hands at the beginning of a game, acknowledging a good play, no trash talk and congratulating the winners after the game all show respect. Both teams will play better.**

**Coaches generally have a great deal more knowledge about the specific sport than the players. Their job is first to pass on that knowledge to their players to make them skilled. Recognizing that they are learning and need time to be proficient, but never perfect, the coach can respect where each is at and provide constructive criticism and give positive encouragement whenever possible. With the referees they need to acknowledge that they are most knowledgeable on the rules and their job is to ensure that the rules are followed and call the penalty when there is a violation. It is best to not talk to them and accept the decisions that they make during the game. In doing so they are being an example to their players that the penalty decisions are the responsibility of the referees and needed to be accepted. The team has to prepare to continue play from that point. These ways of showing respect the players will play better and the referees will call accurate penalties.**

**The referees’ job is to see that the rules are followed and when violated to allocate a penalty. To do so they need to remain objective by maintaining neutral expressions and not allowing coaches to try to talk to them in order to try and influence their decisions. They should only talk to them when a clarification is required. They can give warnings if disrespectful behavior is seen. Without distractions, their focus remains solely on the rules.**

**Fans are there because they enjoy the sport, have members of the family/friends who are players, have developed a loyalty to the team. Naturally they want their team to win, but they need to recognize that mistakes are made and the other factors that affect the results- weather, home field, motivation, momentum, etc. Fans can show respect for all players by clapping and cheering their team on, being courteous to the team’s fans and congratulating them if their team wins the game. They do not need to voice their opinion on the coach’s game plan nor the calls of the referee. Their actions allow for a better played game.**

**Together during 2016 the area schools and the Door County Civility Project wanted to do something to encourage fans to be civil. A sign was developed to be displayed at school sporting event which has this message to the fans.**

**Please remember these are student athletes playing a game.**

**As a spectator, you are a role model**

**Be positive, be respectful, be supportive.**

**What a marvelous statement. Thank you for working together to have a civil environment for our young athletes.**

**Orlaine I. Gabert, Door County Civility Project**