

Reinforcing Sportsmanship with Your Team - A Sample Script

An important part of a positive youth sports culture is the way that we interact with everyone involved. Honoring the Game is Positive Coaching Alliance's sportsmanship focused principle to help guide these interactions. Once you feel comfortable with the Honoring the Game principle, you can begin to share it with your team. When athletes understand Honoring the Game, they'll be set up to navigate challenging situations with **dignity** and **self respect**. Below are two key elements to emphasize with your team.

1. Behave Respectfully

We want to strive to treat ourselves and others with dignity and have compassion for the person in front of you. Especially in challenging situations, we should aim to remember and connect to the humanity in everyone.

2. ROOTS

There are five elements of our sport that we want to behave respectfully towards - **R**ules of Competition, **O**pponents, **O**fficials, **T**eammates, and **S**elf. We start out with Self.

- **Self** - We begin here because we are in control of our decisions, our actions, and what we model to others. That doesn't mean it can't be really difficult to control our emotions and our behaviors. In order for us to have dignity for ourselves and self pride, we need to be able to have self control. Here are a few examples: 1) Walk away, 2) Count to 5, 3) Take some deep breaths. Let's take a moment now so that you can figure out which strategy would work for you. Feel free to make up one and share with your teammates! How we maintain our self control impacts how we show dignity to others. Behave as you would towards anyone as the best version of yourself.
- **Rules of Competition** - Playing within the rules of competition will help keep you safe and to ensure fairness and integrity within a competition. Understanding these boundaries will help you push, explore, and take risks within the guidelines of the game. We may not agree with every call, we might get frustrated as we play, but staying composed helps us focus on our performance and helps us represent our team in the best way.
- **Opponents** - While we want to compete fiercely, this doesn't mean that the opponent is our enemy. Let's be grateful that we have opposition to play against and that we have an opportunity to test ourselves and our development versus others.
- **Officials** - Officials are people who show up to our games with the intent to keep play safe and fair. They strive to do the best they can and, even so, may make mistakes. Focus on yourselves, your performance, and your support of each other.
- **Teammates** - A big part of playing our sport is being part of a team. If we support, encourage and learn alongside our teammates, the more positive our experience will be. We show up to this team, all from different backgrounds, all with different experiences. We will be stronger when we connect with each other and we'll also play better together as a team.

