Where Does Your School Stand on Sportsmanship?
~ Michelle McCann – NW District Representative

Sportsmanship. That's a big word we tend to hear a lot about, especially being involved in middle school or high school sports. Dictionary.com defines sportsmanship as, "sportsmanlike conduct, as fairness, courtesy, being a cheerful loser, etc." How does your school define and view sportsmanship? As cheerleading coaches, I think it's really important to understand what good sportsmanship is and how to show it.

Why is it so important that we cheer coaches understand good sportsmanship? When it comes down to it, your cheerleaders are a huge representation of your school. When you think about what all the cheerleaders do, they are for the most part at almost every football game, basketball game, and wrestling meet. Because of that, cheerleaders are the face of spirit at their school, and spirit and sportsmanship most definitely go hand in hand.

It seems nowadays that every school has different limits on what they allow at sporting events when it comes to parents and specifically the student section, and almost everyone will have different opinions on what they might think is or isn't ok on how spectators should act and cheer or what they should be allowed to say. Some schools might not tolerate ANY kind of trash talking or negative acting towards the other team, but others might be more tolerant and argue that it's just a part of sports. If you are a newer coach, it might be a good idea to sit down with your principal or AD and get a feel for what their stance is on the dynamic of how the student section and parents can be at games. Find out if they are more strict or more lenient on their expectations of their fans at sporting events. Connect with them about how YOU feel about sportsmanship and what your expectations will be for your cheerleaders and the standard that you will hold them to while they are in uniform at games/meets.

That being said, make sure you do know your expectations for your cheerleaders! No matter where your administrators stand on what they do or don't allow at events, it is always our job to make sure our cheerleaders are cheering in a FUN and POSITIVE manner. Here is what our NFHS Spirit Rules book has to say about cheerleaders in their Philosophy section: "Being one of the most visible and recognizable representatives of a school, spirit groups are in a position of great influence; therefore, high standards of conduct are essential." It also says, "Spirit group activities should center on ‘leading’ or ‘directing’ the cheering of students and fans...these activities should be focused on: creating a cooperative environment among the spirit groups, athletes, student bodies, school administrators, and the communities." It's so important that we use our position as coaches to make sure that we are holding our cheerleaders to high standards when it comes to how they act on the sidelines and at the mat. Even if your fans might be getting rowdy or worked up, have your cheerleaders do things to offset that. For example, if the crowd starts booing, start a chant to try to get the crowd to change from booing to chanting.(continued page 2)
The best advice I have ever received

......My family and their needs should come before my job commitments.

Always put my family first.

~Paula Kirkpatrick, SE District Rep
Things to Do NOW for Tryouts
~ Jeanne Ehn, Executive Director

Regardless of the tryout option a coach might pick, there are some steps to take to make sure things go smoothly and still improve squad skills.

1. Have a conversation with the athletic director so he/she is aware of the picked plan and can assist as needed. Make sure it is okay with the administration as well (your AD will do this). These are new times for everyone. The more communication, the better. Perhaps make the decision together or give reasoning why the chosen option is the best for all.

2. It might be smart to contact all potential cheerleaders with some ideas to help them improve their skills on their own. If your school has a website, post it so cheerleaders know what social media outlets to use.
   A. Contact potential cheerleaders with the tryout plan. It will help them know what to expect.
   B. Urge potential cheerleaders to perfect their motion technique while looking in a mirror. Give them tips on placement so they really can improve. This will save time when the season really gets going. Maybe they could send you a video for you to suggest improvements.
   C. Ask them to get outside and video jumps for improvement. Give them more tips or websites to research. That way when they play back the video they have things to watch for. They do not have to send these to you. Remind them to check for holes in the ground or a low hanging tree branch before beginning.
   D. Do not promote “gathering to practice.” They need to be good stewards of social distancing. Coaches who put the stay at home expectation in front of their cheerleaders will help it happen. The more they stay home, the sooner the team can be picked and the season started.
   E. Optional: Send some season requirements to learn: the school song, a motion technique drill, some simple, often used chants. Ask them to learn and perfect each one. An expectation would be that they know these when the season begins.
   F. Invite potential cheerleaders to share it with their friends or others they'd like to see on their squad.

Consider This:
NCA and UCA are offering help with free virtual tryouts and judges. Just remember to okay this tryout with your athletic director and administration before beginning. Contact your school’s Varsity Rep for more information.

ConGRATULATIONS!!!
2020 ICCA
Academic Scholarship Winners
Paige Beck, Mount Vernon
Savannah Stalzer, Albia
Karson Swim, Oskaloosa

Being a Proactive Coach
~ Paula Kirkpatrick, SE District Rep.

When I think of a Proactive Coach, I picture a coach who does everything possible to promote their cheer program and make sure it is seen as an important athletic program. A proactive coach advocates for their program and works to make sure the cheer program is treated like all other athletic programs and activities at the school. A proactive coach gets training and learns all the safety rules. So if you would like to be a proactive coach, here is what you should do: Attend Iowa Cheer Coaches’ Conference and learn all you can. Work closely with your AD and Principal, with the goal to be part of the athletic programs at school. Treat your cheerleaders as athletes. Athletic practices, athletic training, athletic mindset. Have the cheer program on the rotation for new uniforms. Advocate for all the safety equipment that you need. Refer to yourself as the cheer COACH. You are the coach, not the sponsor. Be sure you coach your team the way other coaches do. Give your cheerleaders every opportunity that you can, such as ICCA events. Lastly, reach out to other coaches. Network through the ICCA social media opportunities. It is a great way to learn new things and help each other.