

SUPPORT BLUE DEVIL PRIDE

A PARENT'S ROLE



BLUE DEVIL SPORTSMANSHIP STATEMENT :

We believe that sportsmanship in the Evansville Community applies to all our athletes and everyone that supports them.

BLUE DEVIL SPORTSMANSHIP EXPECTATIONS :

- Respect yourself, others and our school
- Act with compassion
- Initiate cooperation
- Demonstrate self control
- Excercise responsibility
- Remember that honesty is the best policy

BLUE DEVIL SPORTSMANSHIP WILL ENSURE :

An environment where others are valued, optimal performance is pursued and productive citizens are developed.

LETTER FROM THE ATHLETIC DIRECTOR, BRIAN CASHORE

Welcome parents to the world of Blue Devil Athletics. As a parent, you are a very important piece to the development of "the total athlete." It is your responsibility to support your student athlete by understanding and aligning yourself with the athletic department's philosophies, and by modeling positive sportsmanship behavior.

It is an expectation of the School District and the Athletic Department that parents will consistently model good sportsmanship. Both parenting and coaching are extremely difficult roles. By establishing and understanding of each role, we are better able to accept the action of the other and provide a greater benefit to children.

As parents, when your children become involved in our programs, you have the right to understand the expectations that coaches have of your child. This begins with clear communication from the coach of your child's program. As parents, your objective is to support your children in such a way that your behavior models the key character traits that we are trying to teach. We believe that a sport is a vehicle for parents to teach their children "lessons in life" which go beyond winning and losing. As an athletic department, we need to explain how parents can teach their children to deal with adversity, support a group effort, how to be trustworthy, and help build confidence (all of which are part of the greater philosophy based on developing the whole child).

This booklet exemplifies the high standards we expect not only from our athletes and coaches, but from you as a parent. Everything that is explained and suggested in the booklet support John Wooden's Pyramid for Success. Mr. Wooden's pyramid is based on a foundation of universal principles that develop not only athletic performance, but individuals who make a difference as citizens, long after their middle and high school years are over.

THE EVANSVILLE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT MISSION

TO PRODUCE RESPONSIBLE, PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS BY INSTILLING THE CHARACTERISTICS AND SKILL SETS THAT GO HAND AND IN HAND WITH ATHLETICS AND LIFE, ALL WHILE LIVING UP TO CHALLENGES AND CARRYING ON THE STRONG TRADITION THAT IS EVANSVILLE ATHLETICS

BLUE DEVIL PERSEVERANCE



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM PARENTS

Q: WHY DO WE WANT OUR CHILDREN INVOLVED IN ATHLETICS?

As parents, we want our children involved in athletics because we recognize our children, especially teenagers, are often more receptive and open to learning from others outside their family. With that in mind, we want them involved in athletics or other extracurricular activities because we want them to be connected to others who share some of our same values.

Athletics is vitally important to their development as persons and citizens within the greater world, because it will provide them with some of their first opportunities to put a group before themselves. We entrust the teaching of our children's ethics and morals to their coaches and teammates in the hope that their unique connections with the group will help guide our children in their moral decision making.

With this trust, we acknowledge that we will stay out of this new dynamic and not create conflict for our student athletes or the team. Athletics provides the opportunity for our children to make choices about how they spend their time, what they value, what is fair, and the importance of winning and losing in a nurturing environment where they can safely discuss their choices and learn from their mistakes with minimal consequences. Being involved in a sport or team becomes the vehicle to help our student athlete learn positive behaviors.

Q: WHAT CAN WE, AS PARENTS, DO TO HELP SUPPORT OUR STUDENT ATHLETES'S ROLE ON A TEAM?

Every student athlete has a unique and valuable role on the team. Sometimes a student athlete may not like the role, but there are things he/she can do to make that role better. Student athletes need to be prepared that roles change on any team due to many factors - some within their control and some outside of their control. The role a parent plays in this is to reinforce and support the coach to the best of his/her ability. We encourage our student athlete to talk to their coaches about any concerns and ask their coaches questions about their role, as well as seek advice as to how to move from that role to something different. We wait and let our student athlete voice their opinions and perspective, rather than start by telling them what we believe to be true about the team situation. We recognize that it is the coach's role to provide an environment where their needs are met and every team responsibility is being valued. As parents, we can encourage our student athlete to embrace their role at this point in time, understanding that it may change or be modified. The one thing parents can do, that no one else can do, is provide that unconditional support regardless of the role your student athlete has on the team.

Q: HOW CAN WE BEST SUPPORT OUR STUDENT ATHLETE DURING THE GAME?

During the game, your role as a parent is to be a spectator, which is different than being a parent. One of the main complaints from the children is that spectators (parents) often coach the players from the sidelines. While these well-meaning parents are obviously trying to help their children, the message the student athlete hears is: "I am not competent enough to solve my own problems; I do not have control of the activity; they (the parents) don't care about me unless I perform; or they don't care about me unless I perform at a certain level."



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Q: HOW CAN WE BEST SUPPORT OUR STUDENT ATHLETE THROUGHOUT THE SEASON?

MAKE SURE OUR STUDENT ATHLETES:

- Follow the rules set forth by the coach and team
- Get to practices on time
- Feel comfortable coming to us to talk about his/her sports experiences and concerns
- Feel prepared for the games and practices
- Are well rested and eating healthy to optimize performance
- Stay on top of their school assignments and maintain the level of grades required for athletic participation

MAKE SURE WE ARE ALL PRESENT AT THEIR GAMES IN A ROLE AS FANS SHOWING OUR SUPPORT

Q: AM I CHEERING OR AM I COACHING? WHAT IS MY ROLE?

REMEMBER, THERE ARE FOUR ROLES TO ANY SPORT:

- 1) COACH...**Let the coach be the coach
- 2) OFFICIAL...**Let the official officiate
- 3) PLAYER ATHLETE...**Let the student athlete play
- 4) SPECTATOR...**As parents, be a positive and supportive spectator of the game
 - *Be there
 - *Be positive
 - *Be seated

When students change into their uniforms and become an athlete, our job on the sideline is to change our "uniform" as well: from being a parent to becoming their greatest fan. It is our job to show up at the games and be supportive, not to become the coach or the expert. We are here to share the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat - together. As parents, we have to be there to cushion setbacks with positive comments. It is good to be positive, but it's good not to overdo it. Players should not confuse our voices with the public address system.

Rather than coaching from the sidelines, parents can cheer from the sidelines. Cheering is different in that it generally occurs after the play, rather than during the play. Cheering is positive and reinforces the behavior that we want repeated. When cheering, it is best to focus on what the student athlete did, rather than what they are doing or what they should be doing. When praising your child or others, try to focus on those aspects of the game the individual actually had control over (choices, effort, attitude, preparation, planning) rather than what the student athlete did not have control over (results, winning, scoring, physical and/or psychological limitations, technical limitations, innate abilities, etc.) Other considerations when cheering from the sidelines include:

- Avoid negative gesturing to officials, players, coaches or the fans.
- Never disagree openly with an official or coach's decision. Carry on ethically and maturely, regardless of your true feeling.
- Extend congratulations to your team players and also the opposing team players when you witness good sportsmanship, skilled plays or great effort.

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Q: WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE IS A CONFLICT BETWEEN A STUDENT ATHLETE AND A COACH?

There are situations that may require a conference between the coach and the parent(s). It is important that both parties involved have a clear understanding of the other's position. When these conferences are necessary, the following Athletic Department procedures should be followed to help promote a resolution to the issue of concern. If you have a concern to discuss with a coach, this is the procedure you should follow:

- 1) Encourage the athlete to discuss concerns with coach first. If further action is needed, proceed with step 2.
- 2) Contact the coach to set up an appointment with athlete, parent and coach.
- 3) Coach should contact Athletic Director to set up meeting with the athlete and parent.
- 4) Any additional meetings, if appropriate will be determined after the Athletic Director has spoken with all parties involved.
- 5) Please do not attempt to confront a coach before or after a contest or practice.

THESE CAN BE EMOTIONAL FOR BOTH THE PARENTS AND THE COACH. MEETINGS OF THIS NATURE DO NOT PROMOTE CONSTRUCTIVE COMMUNICATION AND/OR RESOLUTIONS.

Q: WHAT IS THE VALUE OF A TEAM SPORT?

When trying to place a value on teams sports as parents, we can ask our student athlete *WHY* they play sports. We can tell them how proud we are of their effort, hard work and their sacrifices that we have observed. Ask them why they made those sacrifices (lots of time put into practices and preparation, giving up other privileges, loss of sleep, potential vulnerability with any public performance). Ask them if they think the sacrifices they made were worth it and why.

Ask them if they felt like they were part of something bigger than just themselves; and if so, how it felt. Discuss with them whether it was easier to make those sacrifices when they knew others were doing the same or vice versa. Also, discuss whether it was easier to do the work with a team or on their own. If your student athlete agrees it is easier with others, ask them why they think the team setting made it easier. Ask them what they like about being on a team. Ask them the feeling of being connected to a group. Team sports becomes that development platform for student athletes to move from the "me" stage (playing the game is all about me) to the "us" stage (playing successfully takes a cohesive team). This learning and awareness is critical for developing that community-minded citizen. Parents can then discuss the value of being part of a bigger group (family, team, school, community, nation and the world); and/or the potential dangers of group (think mob) mentality. Finally we can ask them if they think there are any universal principles they believe in, to help guide themselves in deciding whether to lead the group in other directions, follow a group, or join another group; and then discuss with them those universal principles.

Q: HOW CAN WE, AS PARENTS, HELP OUR STUDENT ATHLETE TO GET THESE NEEDS MET?

As parents, the simplest and most direct way for us to help our student athlete meet their needs is to show a sincere interest in them. Ask him/her question - this shows them that we care about what they think (we want to be connected with them and what they do). It also shows they have control over their activity (it's their game, not our game), and it tells them they are competent and capable to solve their own problems (they can figure out what is best for themselves).



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Q: HOW CAN WE BEST SUPPORT OUR STUDENT ATHLETE AFTER THE SEASON?

BY ENCOURAGING AND REINFORCING THESE CONCEPTS AND FOCUSES:

- The well-rounded student
- Developing into good citizens
- Committing to the conditioning
- Multiple sports
- *Reflections...*What did you learn: What obstacles did you overcome?

Support comes in the form of praise, so do not forget to praise your student athlete for their hard work, persistence effort and quality choices even after the season is over. Teach them how to reflect on their own performance, by asking them about what they would have done differently. Discuss how the decisions they made quickly were still good decisions, despite poor execution or a poor result. Ask them about what their other options were when reflecting, or what they would have done differently. Ask them what their plan is for the future, and what their personal goals are for the next season. As parents, we can help them uncover how their past experiences will help them in the future, as athletes and as citizens.

Q: WHAT CAN WE, AS PARENTS, EXPECT FOR COMMUNICATION:

YOU CAN EXPECT COMMUNICATION FROM YOUR STUDENT ATHLETE'S COACH ABOUT THESE TOPICS:

- Philosophy of the coach
- Expectations the coach has for your student athlete, as well as all players on the team.
- Locations and times of all practices, contest and meetings
- Team requirements (i.e. fees, special equipment, off-season conditioning, etc.)
- Procedure should your student athlete be injured during participation
- Discipline that results in denial of your student athlete's participation

WHAT DO COACHES HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPECT FROM PARENTS:

- Concerns expressed directly to the coach in a respectful and professional manner
- Respect as a person and professional
- Support for their time and effort
- Responsible communication skills

THESE ARE APPROPRIATE CONCERNS TO DISCUSS WITH COACHES:

- Ways you can provide support
- Ways to help your student athlete improve
- Concerns about your student athlete's behavior

Coaches are professionals and are expected to act and make decisions as such. They make judgement decisions based on what they believe to be the best for all students involved.

As you can see from the list above, certain things can be and should be discussed with your student athlete's coach. Other things, such as those identified below must be left to the discretion of the coach.

In many cases, issues related to participation may have already been discussed between your student athlete and their

THESE ISSUES ARE NOT APPROPRIATE TO DISCUSS WITH COACHES AND ADVISORS:

- Playing time/participation level
- Team strategy/game planning
- Play calling/decision making
- Issues related to other student athletes

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Q: HOW DO WE TALK TO OUR STUDENT ATHLETE ABOUT WINNING AND LOSING?

In our discussions with our student athletes, we can help put winning and losing into perspective. Of course, winning is important, but how important? Is it more important than school? Is it more important than the rules of the game? Is it more important than your teammates? Winning is a by-product of being well prepared, having the support of parents and being a member of the team.

Q: HOW CAN WE BEST SUPPORT OUR STUDENT ATHLETES BEFORE THE GAMES:

As parents, we can best support our child by following through with what they have told us and what he/she wants us to do before the game. Have the discussion with your child and ask them what he/she wants from you and then provide it. If they want to be left alone to focus, give them the time and space to prepare for the competition. If they have a pre-game ritual that involves a meal, ask if you can help prepare the meal. If they are nervous or anxious about the competition, ask him/her about their feelings. If they are willing to talk about it, help them focus on the parts of the competition he/she control. Praise them for all the hard work, persistent effort and good choices they have made in preparation for the competition, and assure them that you support them no matter what the outcome of the game.

As parents, we can learn the rules. By understanding the game, we are better able to discuss it with them, other parents, fellow fans and even other students. All of this leads to a better appreciation of the game. We can also practice modeling the character development and behavior that coaches expect.

Q: HOW CAN WE BEST SUPPORT OUR STUDENT ATHLETE AFTER THE GAME?

Once the game is over, our role as a spectator is complete, and we must once again take on the role of parenting. It is when we get these roles confused, that we run into communication problems and misunderstandings. As a parent, we look at the bigger picture...the once that goes well beyond game play and more toward developing the "whole person", including the core characteristics found in the Blue Devil Sportsmanship Statement. Here are some things that we can talk about with our student athlete because these are the things they can control: the choices they made, their attitude, their effort, their preparation, and by asking questions along these lines, we offer a sounding board for our student athlete. Student athletes are continually working through the mental game (not just the physical) and may be harder on themselves than we think. As parents, we can be instrumental in helping cope with issues, lift their spirits and offer positive support when they feel down or feel as if their single mistake caused defeat. It feels good when our student athletes look to us as parents as a resource. Rather than push our perspectives on them as soon as the game is over, we might want to wait for them to ask us for our take, our stories, and our past experiences. Asking questions helps start the dialogue, allowing the student athlete to begin to talk first. Again, part of gaining self confidence in making decisions is to first be allowed to work through their issues and concerns. Other considerations include:

- ⇒ **MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO EXTEND A CONGRATULATORY HANDSHAKE TO OPPONENTS WHEN THE GAME IS OVER. THIS IS NOT JUST AN EXPECTATION OF THE TEAM PLAYERS, BUT OF FANS ALSO.**
- ⇒ **NEVER DEBATE SOMETHING THAT OCCURRED DURING THE GAME AS IT IS IN THE PAST. DISCUSS WITH YOUR STUDENT ATHLETE WHAT HE/SHE HAS LEARNED. TRY AND BE OBJECTIVE WHEN DISCUSSING THE GAME.**
- ⇒ **SHOW CONCERN FOR INJURED TEAMMATES AND OPPONENTS.**
- ⇒ **PROMOTE SPORTSMANSHIP AND YOUR SUPPORT FOR ATHLETICS POSITIVELY WHENEVER AND WHERE THE OPPORTUNITY IS AVAILABLE.**



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Q: AS PARENTS, WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP OUR CHILDREN BECOME BETTER STUDENT ATHLETES??

As parents, we have good intentions and obviously want to help our children to be successful. We want what is best for our children. In the context of middle school and high school sports, it is fair to say that we want our children to have fun, have improved self-esteem and perform at their best. Unfortunately, what we often do and/or say t help our children may n t, in fact make it more fun for them, make them feel better about themselves or even make them play their best. The leading research on development show that "talent" is not innate, but is learned through hours and hours of deliberate and deep practice (10,000 hours to become an expert according to the research).

In order for your child to be motivated to put in the work and effort to even begin that process, he/she needs to become ignited and fall in love with their game. The only way they will learn to love the game is if we make sure they are having fun, make sure they have choices (autonomy) over what they do, make sure they are connected to the game through friends, coach, parent, teammates, and help them feel competent, so they can strive to master the game.

Perhaps it is easier if we think of the game as a gift we give our children. What our children do with this gift is up to them. But once we give it to them (sign them up, bring them to practice, honor their time in getting to practice, etc.) it is theirs, and they get to decide what to do with the gift. In short, it is the children's game and we are the guests. Don't let the uniforms or presence of coaches, officials and spectators fool you - this is still just a game. LET THE CHILDREN PLAY! Smile a lot: laugh frequently and just let the children play!

As parents of student athletes, we need to help create an environment in which our children's sport experiences can meet these needs. We are hopeful that you cheer the children on for the choices they make and the effort they put into the game, rather than instructing them or otherwise telling them what to do.

Thus, our role is to help our student athlete reach optimal performance. This means getting our student athlete to play to the best of their ability. We have a responsibility to make sure they commit to the expectations and requirements of being part of a team. Our role is to help support a positive cycle that perpetually increases their level of enjoyment, improving their self-esteem and improving their performance.

Q: WHAT CAN WE A SPARENTS,SAY TO OUR STUDENT ATHLETE? WHAT SHOULD WE PRAISE?

Children want parents to love and respect them, even if they aren't the star player. As parents, we must be careful what we say, because of the message it might send. No parent would intentionally say he/she was disappointed in his/her child. It is the unintentional words that hurt most. Watch what we praise. Emphasize the effort. Focus on the choices they made, the effort they made, the control they used. Praise the growth, mind-set and the development strides. Praise their journey through their development rather than the final output. Avoid praising their talent ("you are so talented"), their natural ability ("you're a natural at this"), or their intelligence ("you're really smart"). Rather, make comments like "I saw you do this...you made a good choice out there..." Praise their decision making attempts. The better decision makers go beyond copying the star players. They are capable of using creativity to make better decisions as they grow. As parents, you can help them make better and timelier decisions on their own. **ASK THEM QUESTIONS....**

- **"SO WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THIS?"**
- **"WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT NEXT TIME?"**
- **"DOES THAT TELL YOU ANYTHING?"**
- **"DID ANYONE HELP YOU?"**
- **"HOW MUCH WERE YOU ABLE TO CONTROL?"**

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RESOURCES AND REFERENCES FOR PARENTS

THE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT SPORTS DEVELOPMENTAL PHILOSOPHIES

THE MISSION AND VISION OF THE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT ARE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING PHILOSOPHIES. WHEN IT COMES TO MAKING DECISIONS OR FINDING SOLUTIONS, THESE ARE THE PHILOSOPHIES THAT BECOME THE FOUNDATION FOR ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT, COACH DEVELOPMENT AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT.

- ⇒ Life's lessons are just as important as skill building, together they develop the total athlete
- ⇒ We believe that a sport is the vehicle for parents to teach their children "lessons in life" that go beyond winning or losing a game. As an athletic department, we need to explain how parents can teach their children ways to deal with adversity, support a group effort, how to be trustworthy and help build confidence—all of which are part of the greater child development philosophy.
- ⇒ We have to keep it FUN no matter what level.
- ⇒ Winning is an end result. Our focus is not on the end result; our focus is on the process that gets us to improve our results. The process is based on skill development—the more advanced the mental and physical preparedness of an athlete, the more successful our sports teams will become.
- ⇒ It is not enough to tell people they should be good at sportsmanship because everyone has their own definition of good sportsmanship. We need to be very specific in what we mean and give examples of expected behavior.
- ⇒ By varsity level, the better players will play. In order to excel, there will be off-season commitments for individual athlete development.

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