



October 31, 2013

Dear Parents/Guardians,

**It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game.** Unfortunately, in recent years this maxim has not guided our thinking. A win at all costs philosophy and a retreat from the qualities of good sportsmanship have been evident, even in high school sports. Because the Big North Conference believes in the concept of good sportsmanship as the paramount priority in high school athletic programs, we have united as one team to emphasize this goal. The Big North Conference insists that all players, coaches and spectators respect this goal of sportsmanship at all our athletic contests.

Competition, especially at the high school level, must be healthy and productive. Our athletic fields are an extension of our classrooms, and the values of respect and fair play must prevail. We must encourage our students to work to their fullest potential, and put forth their maximum effort. We must also teach them to respect the other players on the field and understand that, after all, it is only a game! In order to reinforce our commitment to insuring good sportsmanship, any athlete that participates in any act of unsportsmanlike behavior may be subject to penalties above and beyond those imposed by the NJSIAA.

The parents and the fans that attend the games also have to make a commitment to good sportsmanship. Not only must we talk to our children about it in our homes, but we must also display it at all athletic competitions. There have been far too many situations in which the athletes exhibit good sportsmanship while the adults in the stands and on the sidelines let their emotions give way to control of anger and aggression. We must cheer on our children and friends but, at the same time, model appropriate behavior and good sportsmanship.

The Big North Conference wants to make it clear to athletes and fans of all its member schools that poor sportsmanship is not acceptable, and will not be tolerated. Parents and fans who engage in negative cheering, or make disparaging remarks toward the officials, players, coaches, or other fans, will be removed from the game, and face the possibility of being barred from future athletic events. It is also incumbent upon our fans that they explain these rules to any guests that accompany them to the game to insure that they understand the consequences of their failure to exhibit proper sportsmanship.

Remember, your children may not always listen to you, but they are always watching you! Please model good sportsmanship for them.

Sincerely,

Denis Nelson  
Big North Conference, Executive Director

