Tight on time? Stick with the 3 Key Takeaways and The Basics. These will help your athletes understand the importance of being a good sport and how to do so.

Have more time? Share the TrueSport Talk and discuss how an Olympic athlete can relate to this lesson.

Extra time? Continue through to Tips & Applications for more valuable sportsmanship information to share with your group.

Looking for more? Explore the Downloads & Additional Resources, which offer additional conversation starters and fun hands-on activities to support each lesson.
A survey conducted by TNS Worldwide Research in 2010 showed that less people thought sportsmanship was worse now versus a generation ago, the first decline in five years. This is significant as 12 years earlier ESPN reported that 81% of those surveyed believed that sportsmanship had declined at all levels.

Still, sportsmanship should continue to be monitored and emphasized by coaches at all levels of sport. Being a good sport involves striving for success while adhering to playing fair, honestly, and with respect for the rules.

Young people often learn from watching others, which also applies to being a good sport. But according to the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports (YSI), young athletes (ages 10-18) identified five different dimensions to being a good sport:

1. **Committing fully to sport participation**
2. **Respecting the rules and officials**
3. **Having concern for social conventions (such as being a good loser)**
4. **Respecting your opponents**
5. **Avoiding having a “win-at-all-costs” mentality**

Encouraging these behaviors and demonstrating them yourself will help create an entire team of good sports.
Team USA Modern Pentathlete, Olympian, and US Army Sergeant Izy Isaksen knows what it means to be a good sport. Eight years after her older sister and two-time Olympian, Margaux Isaksen, began competing in modern pentathlon, Izy followed her into the sport.

She soon realized that people compared the two of them. Izy would overhear spectators and teammates asking, “Who is the better athlete?” and “Who is going to beat the other?”

Instead of letting outside pressures create a negative experience for her and her sister, Izy chose to practice winning and losing with grace and respect. She acknowledged that it would have been easy to let a hyper competitive mindset affect her and her sister’s relationship but instead, they decided to support and cheer for each other regardless of their own performance.

Izy’s experience of competing against and being compared to her older sister taught her to focus on how to perform at her best, rather than putting wasted energy into wishing others to fail. Izy believes that sportsmanship reveals true character, so no matter what situation she encounters during competition, even when face-to-face with her sister, she knows it is important to always treat people with respect and be a good sport.

AMBISSADOR STORY QUESTIONS

1. What was the main point you took away from the ambassador Story?
2. Can you think of a time when you felt frustrated after a loss, yet you still shook your opponent’s hand with respect and gratitude?
3. How can you practice good sportsmanship at practice or during your next athletic season?
**Tips & Applications**

### Being a Good Sport Checklist

While sports provide countless opportunities to teach sportsmanship, it is still largely a learned behavior. This makes it extra important for coaches and parents to set a good example for their athletes.

To see if you and your athletes' behaviors align with sportsmanlike attitudes and philosophy, always ask yourself the following:

- **Is what I did right?**
- **Was it against the rules?**
- **Was it fair to everyone involved?**
- **Would my good sport role models do it?**

If you or your athletes answered no to any of those questions or are unsure, take time to think about your attitude and philosophy toward what it means to be a good sport.

(Adapted from the article “Emphasizing Sportsmanship in Youth Sports” from the publication Spotlight on Youth Sports)

### How TrueSports Act During a Win & a Loss

**DURING A WIN:** TrueSports are gracious winners that show respect to their opponents regardless of if the outcome is close or not.

Good sportsmanship extends itself throughout the competition, not just at the finale. It's always important to:

- **Recognize a ‘good play’ by your opponent (when appropriate) during competition**
- **Genuinely shake hands after competition, and not boast after the win**
- **Remember that every game typically has a winner and a loser, which does not devalue your opponent**

**DURING A LOSS:** TrueSports are respectful toward their opponent after a loss, whether the outcome was narrow or wide.

When the results are not in your favor, it’s best to genuinely recognize the good play of your opponents while shaking hands and to:

- **Never blame someone else for the loss (like teammates, officials, or coaches)**
- **Take responsibility for your part in the outcome**
- **Evaluate your performance and plan to improve on your weak spots for next time**
Five Simple Keys to Sportsmanship

According to Craig Hiller’s book, Playing Beyond the Scoreboard, there are five simple keys to good sportsmanship every youth athlete (and parent) should always keep in mind:

1. **Cool Heads Prevail.**
2. **You Cannot Control a Bad Call.**
3. **The Other Team is the Opponent, Not Your Enemy.**
4. **Arrogance is Ugly.**
5. **Win or Lose, Commit to Class.**

Additional Resources

*Be sure to check out these additional resources available for download:*

**Chalk Talk (PDF)**
*15-minute activity:* Understand your athletes’ sportsmanship knowledge and experience by leading a discussion with these conversation starters.

**Review Handout (PDF)**
*10-minute quiz:* Test your athletes’ knowledge of good sportsmanship with this list of real-life scenarios from professional, collegiate, and Olympic sports. (answers included)

**TrueSport Certificate (PDF)**
*Handout:* Celebrate your groups’ completion of the A Good Sport lesson with this special certificate.
To reinforce the lesson and put TrueSport into action, lead your athletes in the following Chalk Talk.

Instructions

Lead a group discussion with the questions below. Afterwards, encourage the athletes to reflect on their sport experiences and how they can improve on their behavior related to fair play, especially when the competition is intense.

1. Can you provide examples of a time you saw good sportsmanship? What did it look like?

2. Can you provide examples of a time you saw poor sportsmanship? What did it look like?

3. Is there ever a time in competition when poor sportsmanship is acceptable?

4. Can you provide some examples of people in your own life who always model good sportsmanship?

5. Some sports implement a ‘mercy rule’ when the score becomes lopsided, ending the game early. Do you think this is an example of good sportsmanship? Why or why not?
Print out the quiz on the next two pages of this document and have your athletes answer individually or read the real-world sportsmanship scenarios aloud and discuss each as a group.

As you discuss the scenarios, be sure to point out that no matter the sport or level of competition, an athlete’s sportsmanship and attitude will add more to their legacy than how much they win.

If you are knowledgeable about any of these famous scenarios, feel free to elaborate on why they were such great or poor acts of sportsmanship, or look them up on YouTube to show your athletes.

**Answer Key**

G = Good sportsmanship   |   P = Poor sportsmanship

1. **G** (2008 NCAA Division II Softball Tournament)
2. **G** (Michael Phelps at the 2004 Summer Olympics)
3. **P** (Sean Avery in the 2008 Stanley Cup Playoffs; a rule was later made to prohibit this)
4. **G** (Paolo di Canio in a 2000 English Premier League match)
5. **G** (Andy Roddick at the 2005 Rome Masters; he would go on to lose the match)
6. **P** (Derek Jeter in the 2004 American League Championship Series; he was eventually called out)
7. **P** (countless instances)
8. **G** (Jack Nicklaus at the 1969 Ryder Cup)
9. **P** (2009 NCAA soccer match; she was later suspended from her team)
10. **G** (MLB pitcher Armando Galarraga and umpire Jim Joyce in 2010)
Read the following real-world scenarios and circle whether they are an example of good or poor sportsmanship.

**Question 1**

After hitting a homerun, a softball player twists her knee rounding first and can no longer run. Two opponents carry her around the diamond, helping her touch each base and eventually score (even though it meant their team lost the lead).

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP   POOR SPORTSMANSHIP

**Question 2**

After winning four gold medals already, a swimmer gives up his spot in the 4x100m medley relay so his teammate would have a chance to win a medal, too.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP   POOR SPORTSMANSHIP

**Question 3**

Turning his back to the play, a hockey player in front of the net faces the goalie and waves his stick back and forth to distract him.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP   POOR SPORTSMANSHIP

**Question 4**

A soccer player on defense goes down with a serious injury. Despite being on a breakaway, one of the players on offense picks up the ball to stop play and get their opponent quicker medical attention.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP   POOR SPORTSMANSHIP

**Question 5**

A tennis shot is called out by the line judge, giving Player A the match-winning point. However, the shot was actually in and the winning player offered to replay the point.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP   POOR SPORTSMANSHIP
A baseball player running to first slaps the ball out of the first baseman’s mitt to avoid being tagged out.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP       POOR SPORTSMANSHIP

After a tense game, a basketball coach refuses to shake the hand of the opposing team’s coach.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP       POOR SPORTSMANSHIP

After poor sportsmanship is shown from both teams during a golf match, the captain of Team A sinks a putt on the final hole to potentially win the tournament. Instead of forcing his opponent to try and make a match-tying putt for Team B, he concedes the shot, ending the match in a tie.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP       POOR SPORTSMANSHIP

Even though the refs don’t see it, a soccer player pulls her opponent’s hair repeatedly throughout a match to gain an advantage.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP       POOR SPORTSMANSHIP

After making an incorrect call that cost a pitcher a perfect game (where no player reaches base), an umpire admits his mistake to the media and apologizes publicly to the pitcher, who accepts his apology with grace.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP       POOR SPORTSMANSHIP
Congratulations! You have demonstrated that you know how to be a TrueSport Champion!

TrueSport, powered by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), is a movement that seeks to ensure a positive youth sport experience for athletes like you. In learning how to be a good sport, you have gained skills to be a leader both on and off the field.