

## Honoring the Game

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Sportsmanship seems like an out-of-date concept today when professional athletes and coaches act in ways we would not want our children to imitate. Coaches need to reverse this trend and require the parent's assistance to do so.

The concept of "Honoring the Game" represents the behavior we want to model. Honoring the Game is getting to the ROOT of the matter, where ROOT stands for respect for the

Rules,

Opponents,

Officials, and

Tradition of the game.

1) Rules: Coaches and athletes must not try to get away with illegal behavior when officials are not looking. Coaches must teach athletes to respect the rules, even when it is possible to cheat without getting caught. I want our team to play within the spirit of the rules and refrain from "bending" them when it dishonors the game.

2) Opponents: Without opponents, competitive sports make no sense. A worthy opponent calls out the best in us. We must respect opponents and remember they are members of our community. We want to try our hardest to win but not at the expense of demeaning or demonizing our opponents. I intend to show respect for my fellow coaches and teams and teach it to my athletes.

3) Officials: Officials have been selected and trained to enforce rules to keep sports from degenerating into chaos. Officials are not perfect (just like coaches, athletes and parents!) and sometimes make mistakes. However, there is no excuse for treating officials with disrespect when they make errors. I want my players and their parents to show respect for officials even when they disagree with the call.

d) Tradition: The game our children play has a great tradition. As a coach you want to share that tradition with your athletes. You want your team to play the game in such a way that all of us can be proud of them.

Here's how the parents can help:

1) Let your child know that you want him or her to honor the game. Discuss the meaning of each element of ROOT with your child. This idea may be difficult for younger children to understand so you may have to adapt the idea to the age and understanding of your child.

2) Be a good role model. Honor the game when you attend your child's games. Cheer our team and the opposing team when good plays are made. If, in your opinion, an officiating mistake is made, refrain from yelling at the official. Use this as an opportunity to think about how difficult it is to officiate a game perfectly.