



Opponents Showboating

This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.

"As a middle school athletic director, I see many opposing players show-boat after scoring or making other big plays. For our school's athletes, we have strict policies against such behavior. How can we get our opponents to change their ways, at least when they are visiting our school?"

PCA Response by Al Adamsen, PCA Trainer-SF Bay Area

Many coaches and AD's just accept this as the norm and let it go. This benefits no one, and compromises the integrity of the lessons you and similar institutions try to instill in your young athletes.

Key to achieving your goal is communication. Communication is often thought of as a one-time event. It's not. As John Wooden once said, "It's not what you teach. It's what you emphasize." This could not be more true when you're communicating with opposing coaches, administrators, players, parents, etc.

Here are several complementary modes of communication to consider:

- Send a letter to the ADs of the competing schools, detailing your school's culture and the expectations of those that visit. Ask the ADs to share with all their coaches, or at least the ones who will be visiting your school.
- Upon arrival on game day, supply the visiting coach, and potentially parents and other visitors, with a handout detailing the school's culture and expectations of those who visit.
- Post plaques or signs in and near playing areas and locker rooms that reinforce the culture and expectations.
- Make game officials aware of your culture and expectations and ask for their help in enforcement.
- Have announcements read over your public address system so that attendees are urged to honor the game.
- Reward visitors with a simple follow up email thanking them for participating in ways that align with your culture.

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- Elevate issues of gloating and other unsportsmanlike behavior to league administrators.
- Share your culture and norms at AD meetings. Be consistent: share your cultural norms over and over and over again. Again, it's not what you teach/communicate. It's what you emphasize.

Of course, you also may invoke PCA as a reputable third party, whose advice can take the focus off you and your school's expectations and place it in the broader context of the purpose of youth sports.

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