

Dear Northern Lakes League Parent / Spectator,

On behalf of the Northern Lakes League (NLL) and its eleven member schools, we want to thank you for your continued support of interscholastic athletics. Our league has a rich and storied history dating back to 1956. Your support contributes to the ongoing success of the NLL year after year.

For those of you that are new to our league (Clay, Findlay, Fremont Ross and Whitmer), we want to welcome you to the Northern Lakes League. We look forward to the first year of our expansion and hope that all our student athletes and parents will have a positive experience.

All Northern Lakes League schools are members of the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA). The OHSAA is committed to serving its member schools and their student athletes in a variety of ways. One of the OHSAA's commitments is to honor their ultimate purpose, which is to foster lifelong values, good citizenship, ethics and a fair-play approach to life among student-athletes while promoting safe and sporting-like athletic environments. The NLL needs your help to help promote these purposes. Specifically, we need your help in promoting safe and sporting-like athletic environments. The OHSAA has adopted the following Fan Fair Play Code:

- **I will remember that young people play sports for THEIR enjoyment.**
- **I will have realistic expectations and will understand that doing one's best is just as important as winning. I understand that ridiculing an athlete for making a mistake is not acceptable behavior.**
- **I will respect the official's decisions and will encourage others do the same.**
- **I will respect and show appreciation for the coaches and understand that they have given their time to provide sports activities for our young people.**
- **I will encourage athletes and coaches to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.**
- **I will show respect for my team's opponents because I realize there would be no game without them.**
- **I will not use bad language and will not harass athletes, coaches, officials or other spectators.**
- **I will always show good sportsmanship. Young people learn by example.**

The NLL fully supports all aspects of the OHSAA Fan Fair Play Code. Our expectation for all our spectators is that you will abide by these points to ensure we promote a safe and sporting-like athletic environment.

Sportsmanship also goes far beyond a handshake at the end of each game. It is something that interwoven into every aspect of a team's season and includes all those that attend our sporting events.

Back in the fall of 2017, we hosted our first Northern Lakes League Sportsmanship Conference. This sportsmanship conference brings together student athletes from all our member schools to talk about sportsmanship and what it means to conduct yourself in a positive manner while still being competitive. At the first sportsmanship conference, our student athletes developed the NLL's definition of sportsmanship that has become an integral part of our league. The NLL defines sportsmanship as:

Sportsmanship is upholding a competitive environment where respect, compassion and integrity are expected by all athletes, coaches, officials & spectators.

Every year, we meet with a different group of our student athletes from all our member schools, to review this definition and discuss if it still meets our objectives as a league. Since 2017, each group has agreed that this definition remains applicable and drives how our league wants to represent itself at each one of our games.

Each athlete, coach, official and spectator is a stakeholder in this definition. The league's administrators support this statement as well. We hope that you will help us promote this definition to make each game a positive experience for all involved.

One final note regarding our officials that officiate games in the NLL. There is widespread concern locally and nationally about the recruitment and retention of officials in all our sports. In the last several years, we have seen an alarming number of officials retire or not renew their certifications to continue to be officials. We are also struggling to recruit new officials for all sports. In many sports, it has recently gotten to the point where we are having a difficult time finding officials to officiate games across Northwest Ohio. One of the main reasons officials are leaving or not signing up to become officials is because of the verbal abuse they encounter at many athletic contests.

Please keep in mind that many of our officials are very similar to you. They maintain a full-time job and officiating is something they enjoy doing as a hobby. Many also do it to give back to a sport that gave them so much while they were growing up. Again, our officials work extremely hard to ensure fair and safe play. **The NLL requires all our fans to treat all officials with respect before, during and after all athletic contests.**

Together, we can all make a difference. Again, the Northern Lakes League appreciates all you do for our league. We hope that you will adhere to the OHSAA Fan Fair Play Code listed above and support our quest to make sure **WE** are doing everything we can to promote a safe and sporting-like athletic environment.

Best of luck to you and your team this season!

Sincerely,



Richard Browne
Commissioner - Northern Lakes League