

Parents/Coaches,

The CYC South Central District, will focus on Sportsmanship during the 2018 basketball season.

The leadership group for our district has noticed a trend towards more competitive games (which is great) and more skilled teams and players (also great), but has also noticed an increase in negative behavior in our gyms, by coaches, players, as well as fans. During these past few seasons, the number of technical fouls, player and coach suspensions, and fan ejections has increased in all levels of play (we even had an ejection from a 4th grade girls' game!).

We have discussed this trend for years, and have defined several specific initiatives to address this challenge. These initiatives include the mandatory CYC Coaching to Make Positive Different program, the optional CYC program for parents, coaching clinics for new referees, mandatory referee testing each season, active gym monitoring in all gyms, as well as a rapid feedback to the district and lay directors when there is an unfortunate incident in one of our gyms.

We think these programs have been helpful, but clearly have not been enough, given the continuing negative trend and some nasty incidents.

Let's step back. The stated mission of the CYC is:

The Mission of the Catholic Youth Apostolate is to help all young people hear the Gospel message of Jesus Christ and to help all young people actively respond to the Gospel message and enthusiastically participate in the Mission of Jesus Christ and His Church.

We believe strongly in this Mission, and feel the need to reinforce that the CYC athletic programs are simply a vehicle to spread the teaching of Jesus and His Church. While winning and losing matter, there is clearly a lot more at stake from our program.

To focus on the many positive aspects of youth sports, we are declaring the 2018 Basketball Season to be the Season of Sportsmanship in CYC South Central.

Sportsmanship means many different things, but in our view, it means fostering a safe, positive environment for our kids, as well as for our coaches, parents and, yes, even our referees(!), to enjoy the benefits of athletics and friendly competition,

In our view, that means that we need to refocus our coaches and players on playing the game in a positive manner, and refocus our fans on positive cheering.

We need to eliminate unnecessary and counterproductive behaviors by coaches such as yelling at the referees or scorekeepers, disputing every call, or even running up the score on lesser opponents. We need players focused on positive competition, playing hard but not trash talking, not making faces at referee calls or exhibiting other negative behaviors. We need our fans to cheer for good plays (for both teams) and to stop interacting with the officials, period. We need parents to reinforce our message with their children.

The reality is given the number of games played, the skill level of our referees varies, and many are novices. We have established training programs, and are working on mentoring young referees to improve their skills. Let's please support their efforts so they continue in the profession, and realize a perfectly officiated game will not occur. The number of game officials is declining nationwide given the boorish behavior of game participants, and we'd like to work to reverse this trend in our program.

Our motto for our 2018 initiative is: Let our Teams Play, Fans Cheer, Refs Officiate, and let's have EVERYONE Stay Positive!

The plan is simple. We plan to reinforce in every gym, and at every game, the concept of Sportsmanship and the key tenets of our motto.

- At every gym you will see a poster highlighting the Sportsmanship motto
- Before every game we will bring teams to the fans for a collective prayer, focused on Sportsmanship
- We will monitor the “atmosphere” of each gym. We will have awards for teams that foster positive experiences, and some negative consequences for teams that do the opposite
- We will provide a forum for submitting post-game comments on officiating with the goal being to enhance (not degrade) their skills

That's it really. The idea is to make Sportsmanship front and center. Coaches, please talk to your players about this, and reinforce the message in practices and games. Parents, please do the same with your kids, and with your own parents (grandparents have been the worst fans, at times!). We also encourage parents, take the CYC 27-minute Athletic Parenting Program. It has some good reminders and following is the web address.

<https://els.coaching-coaches.com/user/register?regcode=iqzjwcvqov>

If you have any questions, please contact your lay directors. We hope your teams have a great season, and God Bless!

Attached is a copy of the new Pre-Game Prayer, as well as a copy of some basic CYC South-Central rules. We know many of our fans (and even coaches) aren't aware of some rules. Please review both the prayer and rules, and go through this with your kids. Thanks again.