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## Parents and adult fans: The biggest challenge facing high school sports today

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Inappropriate adult behaviors at high school athletic events across the country have reached epidemic proportion.

When more than 2,000 high school athletic directors were asked in a recent national survey what they like least about their job, 62.3 percent said it was, “dealing with aggressive parents and adult fans.”

And the men and women who referee or umpire those contests agree. In fact, almost 60% of new officials registered in Iowa in 2016-17 did not return to officiate in 2017-18, and unruly parents are often cited as a major reason why. As a result, there is a growing shortage of high school officials here in Iowa, and in baseball, football, track and field, and wrestling, the IHSAA is seeing record lows. No officials means no games.

If you are a parent attending a high school athletic event this fall, you can help by following these six guidelines:

- 1. Act your age.** You are, after all, an adult. Act in a way that makes your family and school proud.
- 2. Don't live vicariously through your children.** High school sports are for them, not you. Your family's reputation is not determined by how well your children perform on the field of play.
- 3. Let your children talk to the coach instead of doing it for them.** High school athletes learn how to become more confident, independent and capable—but only when their parents don't jump in and solve their problems for them.
- 4. Stay in your own lane.** No coaching or officiating from the sidelines. Your role is to be a responsible, supportive parent, not a coach or official.
- 5. Remember: Participating in a high school sport is not about a college scholarship.** According to the NCAA, only about 2% of all high school athletes are awarded a sports scholarship, and the average total value of that scholarship is only around \$18,000.
- 6. Make sure your children know you love watching them play.** Do not critique your child's performance on the car ride home. Participating in high school sports is about character development, learning and having fun—not winning and losing.

Purchasing a ticket to a high school sporting event does not give you the right to be rude, disrespectful, or verbally abusive. Cheer loud and be proud, but please also be responsible and considerate as a spectator.

The future of high school sports in Iowa is dependent on you.

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