

MCL SPORTSMANSHIP CONSIDERATIONS

Updated 11-17-22

INTRODUCTION: As a Christian league, we believe in carrying ourselves differently than the world system. Through the years, the board of athletic directors has consistently discussed having a collective responsibility to encourage one another's athletic programs through a foundational shared philosophy of building Christian community among members.

As the various members in the league face enrollment and facility challenges, it is not uncommon for there to be a significant disparity in athlete and coaching skill. This presents numerous scenarios each season where there is an opportunity for a "blow out." The MCL Fall Meeting minutes on 11-21-19, item number 6.h reads: "There was a brief discussion on how to treat a blow out game. We discussed ways to get creative so that the re-building team doesn't become discouraged. Also, making sure that our coaches know how to handle the games ahead of time." As Christians, we agree that a level of kindness is required of us that is foreign to most of the world. It is our desire to see strategies implemented where fierce, high level competition can exist in the same realm as showing lovingkindness.

In light of the previous comments, the MCL Spring Meeting minutes on 05-28-2020, item number 2 reads: "We unanimously decided the focus point for the upcoming year will be loving fervently and being thankful for each other in such a way that all coaches and players are reminded over and over about living it out." And item number 9 reads: "We reviewed & discussed our guidelines on the mercy rule and sportsmanship during a lopsided game. It is difficult to come up with perfect rules for treating a weaker team with respect and for treating a stronger team with respect. We need to recognize that it is often difficult and uncomfortable for both the stronger and weaker teams during a blowout. It needs to be an ongoing conversation about loving fervently and being thankful for the other team. This requires love and trust and communication."

The MCL Spring Meeting minutes on 04-15-2022, item number 7 reads: "We are concerned with the fact that it seems like we are not living up to our statement of purpose regarding sportsmanship, and that we want to raise the bar for our coaches, fans, and players. We decided to create a handout with expectations of conduct for each sport that addresses fan sportsmanship, player sportsmanship, player safety, and how to care for another team and make it a positive experience, especially during a blow out. We will submit ideas to the MCL President, who will compile it for the league members to review."

This document is the result of those discussions.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS:

(TO BE DISCUSSED BY AD'S & COACHES, THEN TRAINED THROUGHOUT THE SEASON)

COACHES BEHAVIOR

1. Athletic directors need to clearly communicate the standards of sportsmanship and character to their coaches. Coaches need to know the standards and conduct themselves in a way that is different from the world, and is consistent with our Christian faith and honoring toward our Heavenly Father.
2. Coaches may yell specific instructions to players, but should avoid yelling at players in a general way. For example, instructing players to "move your feet," or "box out," is better than yelling "get tough."
3. Coaches should understand the difference between demanding and demeaning. Coaches should not demean a player (especially publicly) with non-instructional statements like, "You're stinking it up out there," or "Don't be such a baby." Coaches should not insult a player's intelligence, self-worth, ability, toughness, spirituality, social class, or anything else inappropriately personal.
4. Coaches should not grab, yank, shove, or otherwise physically contact a player in a disparaging or confrontational manner.
5. Coaches should not throw objects, kick chairs, or otherwise disrespect property.
6. Coaches should not disrespect referees or show disgust verbally or with their gestures. Coaches should not excuse their own bad behavior by saying, "I'm just protecting my team," or "I'm just trying to pump-up my team."
7. Coaches and assistants should stay within their defined coaching areas, and should follow the rulebook regarding standing or sitting and talking to referees.

TEAM SPORTSMANSHIP

1. Purposeful action should be taken to communicate encouragement toward the opponent, especially in a lopsided contest.
2. Purposeful action should be taken to avoid "running up the score" when opponents are not equally matched.
3. Players should never trash-talk.
4. Players must be instructed how to go through the handshake line at the end of a contest. Players should look their opponents in the eye, shake their hand, etc. Players should not be permitted to take off their jerseys, avoid eye contact, be on their phones, wear headphones or earbuds, or not participate in any other way.
5. Fans should also be sensitive to excessive celebration and cheering during a blow-out, either for an easy play by the leading team or a mistake by the losing team.

SPORT SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

BASKETBALL

1. Safety concern: Never foul from behind on a fast-break lay-in or dunk attempt, no matter what the score. Contact from behind on a fast break lay-in carries a much higher risk of serious injury.
2. Safety concern: Never undercut a person who is airborne, whether it is a shooter or during the action of boxing out.
3. Safety concern: Never stick out a knee when setting a screen. Sticking out a knee can result in injury to either the defensive or offensive player.
4. Do not fast break or outlet pass resulting in a breakaway lay-in or dunk when ahead by 20 or more.
5. Do not backcourt press when ahead by 20 or more. Do not “practice the press” when ahead by a large amount.
6. Move closer to the basket on defense when a weaker opponent cannot even take a shot. In succession: no frontcourt press; play defense inside the three point line only; play defense with one foot in the key.
7. Avoid taking a large number of 3-pointers.
8. Avoid higher-skill plays that wouldn’t normally be done by the team. For example, if the team doesn’t usually do alley-oop dunks against a strong opponent, avoid them against a weak opponent.
9. Avoid playing “keep away,” or passing the ball a bunch of times before scoring. Don’t rush; just run the normal offense and then go back and play defense according to the succession of moving closer to the basket in order for the other team to take a shot.
10. Avoid target scoring. For example, don’t try to score 80 or 100 points.
11. Avoid excessive celebration during a blow-out. For example, a team should not hoot, holler, and jump for joy upon reaching a score of 100-40.

Unusual possibility: In the second half of the regular season, weaker teams who are not competitive have sometimes chosen to forfeit certain games against the top teams, but still play a contest. The stronger team then agrees to field a team that is more likely to play a close game, usually by using younger or less-experienced players. Whichever team wins, it still goes into the league standings as a loss for the team that forfeits. However, the game that is played is more likely to be competitive and a positive experience for both teams.

SOCCER

1. Safety Concern: Never slide tackle from behind, no matter what the score or situation. Slide tackling from behind carries a much higher risk of serious injury.

2. Safety Concern: Avoid playing younger or smaller players on defense or as goalie. Older, stronger forwards playing against younger, smaller defenders carries a higher risk of injury for the smaller players. Younger, smaller players should be forwards or midfielders.
3. To avoid running up the score, play weaker or younger players on offense to reduce the number of goals scored.
4. Work the ball down the field instead of booting it ahead for a breakaway attempt.

VOLLEYBALL

1. Avoid higher-skill plays that wouldn't normally be done by the team. For example, if the team doesn't usually jump-serve against a strong opponent, avoid jump-serving against a weak opponent.