



## **For Your Information**

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### **AMERICANS: SPORTSMANSHIP STILL ON DECLINE**

#### **National Survey Reveals More Than Half of Americans Witnessed Poor Sportsmanship at Youth Level**

GLENVIEW, Ill. (July 25, 2008) – For the third year in a row, the vast majority of Americans believe that sportsmanship is worse now than when they were growing up, according to a national survey fielded by TNS and the Awards and Recognition Association (ARA), which conducts an annual survey on the state of sportsmanship.

More than 85 percent of Americans from ages 20 to 80+ think sportsmanship is worse now than when they were growing up, a 10 percent decrease from the previous year's dissatisfaction level of 94 percent.

But the news on sportsmanship isn't all bad. Slightly more of us (83 percent) have witnessed positive displays of sportsmanship than have witnessed examples of bad sportsmanship (78 percent).

“We've been polling Americans for three years now to better gauge sentiments on sportsmanship and most importantly, to see what we can do about it,” said Cathy Garcia, ARA president. “What was most interesting was the high percentage of people witnessing negative sportsmanship from parents, coaches and players at the youth level. This is an issue we need to address at the grade school level, and with coaches and parents everywhere.

“Many respondents cited the Central Washington University's girls' softball team as a great example of good sportsmanship,” Garcia said.

## SPORTSMANSHIP ON THE DECLINE—Add One

“Is that the reason for the slight decrease in the number of Americans dissatisfied with sportsmanship this year? Who knows, but that supreme act of sportsmanship certainly captured the attention of Americans nationwide.”

### ARA National Sportsmanship Award

The most-often cited negative portrayal of sportsmanship was fans acting out, according to the survey. Other negative behaviors witnessed included brawling among players as well as spectators and drug use among athletes.

To help sway the negative trend and encourage good sportsmanship among athletes, coaches and parents and teach sportsmanship at all levels, ARA has recruited some of the most renowned coaching legends and sports experts to a blue-ribbon panel that rewards college football sportsmanship standouts with its national sportsmanship award. As the only national award that focuses on sportsmanship, it stands out as unique among the millions of sports trophies presented to athletes annually.

“The ARA has assembled an unprecedented committee of award-winning coaches to help shed light on sportsmanship and hopefully elicit some positive change,” said award- and bowl-winning retired Brigham Young Coach LaVell Edwards, who has chaired the panel since its inception. “Our work includes selecting the winner of the annual, one-of-its-kind ‘ARA Sportsmanship Award.’”

The solid-bronze, 125-pound award, designed by sculptor Edward Jonas, is presented to a Bowl Division college football player who exemplifies sportsmanship both on and off the field.

Past ARA Sportsmanship Award winners include: Carolina Panthers running back DeAngelo Williams in 2005, St. Louis Rams running back Brian Leonard in 2006 and Washington State University quarterback Alex Brink in 2007, who was just drafted by the Houston Texans.

### **Tips from the Pros**

Syracuse University former head football coach and ARA blue-ribbon panel member Dick “Coach Mac” MacPherson says coaches and parents need to get a handle on sportsmanship early before it becomes ‘showmanship’ rather than ‘sportsmanship.’”

## SPORTSMANSHIP ON THE DECLINE—Add Two

Americans tend to agree; when polled recently about what age sportsmanship should first be taught, almost nine out of 10 thought it should start in second grade or younger; 61 percent thought it should start with preschool sports. Here are more tips from the pros.

1. ABCs of sportsmanship. **Teach sportsmanship as part of the fundamentals of the sport.**

“Sportsmanship isn’t naturally learned and must be taught daily,” adds Coach Mac. “Whether you’re playing catch in the back yard or watching a game on television, make it a priority to stress the importance of good sportsmanship along with the game.”

2. Go team! “Another way to encourage kids, parents, coaches and fans to be good sports,” adds Coach Mac, “is for parents to cheer for the team, not just their child—this helps teach them the importance of being part of a team.”

3. Don’t show me the money. Focus on the love of the game. “Sportsmanship is turning into a vanishing trait with so much emphasis put on playing for money,” according to retired Texas Tech Red Raiders Coach William Taylor “Spike” Dykes. “If we’re not careful, the end result is going to be players too focused on themselves instead of being on a team.”

More sportsmanship tips from the ARA blue-ribbon include:

4. One strike and you’re out. Create a zero-tolerance policy for bad behavior. This goes for players, coaches, parents and fans.

5. Reward the positive. Give game balls, provide privileges for the ‘best sport of the game,’ or give the opposing team an award.

6. More than the handshake. Start new end-of-the-game rituals that highlight sportsmanship. The handshake is good, but more can be done to make sportsmanship meaningful. From giving the opposing team a game ball to a special song, create an atmosphere that’s positive.

7. Be a reporter. Call or email the local newspaper when witnessing great displays of sportsmanship. Use the media to spread good news.

8. Form a local sports support group. Join forces with local parents, coaches or park districts. Reward acts of positive sportsmanship on a regular basis.

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## SPORTSMANSHIP ON THE DECLINE—Add Three

### About the ARA Sportsmanship Award

The Awards and Recognition Association recognizes good sportsmanship nationally in collegiate football players with its ARA Sportsmanship Award, presented annually to the senior who personifies sportsmanship. ARA's selection committee, chaired by Edwards, includes former collegiate and professional coaches and others, including MacPherson, Christine Brennan, Rod Commons, Lee Corso, Vince Dooley, Spike Dykes, Steve Hatchell, Don James, Bernie Kish, Lisa Malin, Don Nehlen, Tubby Raymond, Gene Stallings, and Grant Teaff. For more information, visit [www.arasportsmanshipaward.com](http://www.arasportsmanshipaward.com)

### About ARA

ARA is comprised of 4,000 retailers and suppliers within the awards and recognition industry. Since 1964, ARA has been enhancing and supporting the awards industry by providing education programs, information, trade shows and networking opportunities. Retail awards and trophy stores that are ARA members proudly display the ARA logo. Look for it the next time you need an award. For more information about ARA, visit [www.ara.org](http://www.ara.org) or contact ARA headquarters by phone at 800/344-2148 or via fax at 847/375-6480.

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