



Good Sportsmanship is a Harvest from Many Seeds

By Bill Gosse

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Winter finally is gone - knock on wood - and the thoughts of outdoor sports, such as fishing, permeate our mental processes.

As the temperatures climb, people vault outdoors to bike, jog or take a brisk walk. It is a rite of spring.

Another spring activity occupies many people's time: planting a garden.

Thoroughly prepared soil can, and usually will, produce bountiful results. But is it just a matter of planting the seeds and waiting for results?

Planting seeds? What's that got to do with sports and sportsmanship?

Sowing seeds plays a huge role in the success of any movement. We all probably have heard the phrase "you reap what you sow".

In today's sports world, it shouldn't surprise us to see unsportsmanlike issues surface more regularly than a swarm of mosquitoes on a warm night. Because of parental influence, poor examples set by college and professional athletes, and overall apathy to high moral standards we are reaping what has been sown.

Last week, I attended an alumni networking event in downtown Chicago.

Have you ever been in downtown Chicago around 5pm? If you like to go people-watching, it's a great place to be.

During our event, I looked out the windows of the Aon Center's 80th floor and got a wonderful view of the world. From that perspective, the world can seem quite overwhelming. It seems no different when we stand in our yard surveying our real garden. It can be daunting thinking of the entire project, but we get started one seed at a time until we finish.

There is an old parable about planting seeds. Some fall on the ground and are eaten by birds. Other seeds fall on shallow soil, sprout quickly and then wilt under the hot sun because of poor roots. Yet other seeds fall among weeds and are choked out with no

results. Finally, some seeds fall on fertile soil, and sprout and grow producing great results.

What does all this mean?

As we plant seeds of great sportsmanship we will get mixed results.

We cannot expect to change the current sportsmanship culture overnight. It's going to take seed planting by all participants in sports: fans, parents, officials, coaches and athletes.

We shouldn't get discouraged when we don't see immediate results.

Some people aren't ready to admit they are poor sports at athletic events. Others may get excited and show flashes of sportsmanship, but then revert to their old ways. Still others won't have the courage to stand up to their peer group and tell them to shape up.

If we are persistent in planting seeds, some people will understand completely and will be great components of change. These people will even come alongside and offer to help, making the collective efforts more productive.

When each of us plant seeds right where we are, we start a grassroots movement of our very own.

Are you sick of what's happening in today's sports world?

Go plant some seeds!