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SPORTSMANSHIP CRITERIA

1. Self-control and exemplary demeanor on the court

The ability to control one's emotions is a valuable skill and one worth striving for. A good Sportsman exhibits self-control. However, being a good sportsman doesn't necessarily mean never expressing emotion. It means that there are acceptable methods and limits for letting off steam. Although there are gray areas, it's generally quite obvious when someone is not a good sportsman. A good Sportsman:

- Never throws a racquet
- Never slams a racquet on the court, net or backdrop
- Never hits balls around
- Never screams, cries, whines, or carries on with other obnoxious behavior
- Never tanks, not even one point
- A good sportsman has self-control, puts out 100%, and treats the physical surrounding with care
- Never curses

2. The manner in which you treat your opponent on the court

This is an area of sportsmanship that is sometimes blatant and sometimes subtle. Some obvious rude actions are:

- Cheating
- Questioning any call within one foot of the line
- Not returning the ball directly to the server for the start of the next point

More subtle methods for intimidating or harassing an opponent are:

- Hitting every ball as hard as you can during the warm-up so that your opponent cannot practice
- Walking at a snail's pace between points to stall or anger your opponent
- Giving glares or stares whenever you're in trouble

Tennis is a sport which to be played effectively, requires cooperation and mutual respect between two or four people. The Code of Ethics speaks of this concept and it's an idea of great value. A sportsman treats his opponent as he would treat himself and:

- Compliments his opponent on good shots
- Returns the ball to the server when the server has turned around and is ready
- Waits for the receiver to be ready before serving both first and second serves
- If the serve is out and is accidentally returned into the net, clears it rapidly so the server's rhythm is not disturbed
- If unsure of a call, calls it good, unless the opponent reverses the call and never asks a spectator
- Shakes hands after the match and congratulates the opponent
- If playing a much weaker player, helps them feel at ease; the world doesn't need any more big shots. This doesn't mean tanking a few games; simply act courteously and beat the person 6-0, 6-0

3. Mature behavior off the court:

If a junior is going to enter the world of competition, then the junior has the responsibility to act in a mature way. Many comments made at tournaments come from the insecurity of a junior. Such comments include "I'll kill that kid", "That kid stinks", and "I would have won except that kid got lucky". This type of comment, when overheard, is not only inconsiderate of one's opponent, but more importantly, it makes the individual saying it look like a fool. In the long run, good friends are more important than a puffed up ego. A good sportsman is a friendly polite person off the court.

4. Respect for umpires, lines people, and tournament officials:

For the most part, umpires, lines people, and tournament officials contribute their time to junior tennis out of the kindness of their hearts. Most tournament players at one time or another have been the victims of a mistake by an official. The ability to effectively and politely handle problems like this is a big part of life, and something we all have to deal with on a regular basis.

In fact most mistakes aren't errors by officials, but sour grapes from a player looking for a scapegoat. Very few match results are determined by an official's error. On the rare occasion when an official is mistaken, it should be kept in the proper perspective. Everyone makes mistakes. A good sportsman treats officials with the respect they rightly deserve.

We encourage good sportsmanship by offering an award for outstanding behavior. Besides encouragement, we also act firmly with juniors acting in an unsportsmanlike manner. The USTA Point Penalty System will be in effect, do not hesitate to use it.