



Office for Youth & Young Adult Ministry
Archdiocese of Newark, NJ



Saint John Paul II Youth Retreat Center / CYO Sports / Catholic Scouting / PJH / Summer Camp

January 6, 2023

To all Parents and Guardians of our CYO Athletes...

We have a very competitive girls CYO basketball game... lots of energy and the gym is rocking! A player from Visiting Team A is fouled. She steps to the foul line... gym is quiet. As she attempts her free throw, a parent in the stands from Home Team B yells out "BRIIIIIICK"! The shooter is stunned and sees the opposing team players laughing at what the "adult" just did. She loses her self-composure and begins to sob uncontrollably at the foul line and needs to be helped off the court.

Believe it or not... this exact scene played out in a CYO grammar school basketball game here in the Archdiocese of Newark. No need to identify the players or teams involved. Because the sad truth is, this same scenario could have happened in so many of our gymnasiums across Bergen, Essex, Hudson and Union Counties.

CYO Sports should be a safe haven for the children entrusted to our care. There is no place for foul language... for taunting... for bullying... for screaming parents... for physical altercations... for ugly comments from spectators. These are KIDS! They deserve better from all of us!

We cannot undo what happened. Yes, the adult involved is serving a suspension from attending CYO games. But I thought we could use this as a wake-up call for all our CYO parents... a chance to ask you to find a way to "up your game" as spectators. Please take the time to read this great article [How Adults Take the Joy Out of Sports \(And How We Can Fix It\) - Changing the Game Project](#). Each family signed a CYO Code of Conduct form... so you know all the things you should not do:

- **Do not officiate** from the stands! Do not berate our game officials! Basketball is a tough game to call... lots of quick moving parts... ten bodies blocking the action... different perspective from different angles... and such varying levels of skill. Our officials know the rules. Let them make the calls.
- **Do not coach your children** from the stands! You only create confusion for your children when you shout out instructions. Let your coaches do the coaching.
- **Do not engage with opposing coaches.** If you do not like the demeanor or style of play employed by the opposing coach, keep your opinions to yourself. If there is an issue, your coach can address it.
- **Never engage with opposing players.** You have no right to insult, jeer or taunt any player on the court. They are all somebody else's child and carry their own issues and insecurities with them.

We challenge you to do better in 2023. Go beyond the "Do Not Do" list. For example:

- **Compliment the referee** after the game... when your team loses.
- **Congratulate the opposing coach** on a game well-played.
- **Cheer from the stands when an opposing team player does something special.** Cheer for the weaker players on the opposing team when they make a free throw.
- If spectators from YOUR team act poorly, stand up and **remind them that is not the way we act here.**
- **Say thank you to the site supervisor** for the time you spent in their gymnasium.

There is a scary trend across youth sports in the United States where parents and spectators are becoming increasingly vocal... abusive... and sometimes even violent! We have over 4000 student-athletes playing basketball this season in our CYO league. When 8000 parents do just a little, it adds up to a whole lot! Let's do our part within the Archdiocese of Newark to stem that tide and show our athletes how much they matter!

Vic Pianese and Tom Conboy

Archdiocese of Newark CYO Sports