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IOWA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
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NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: BAD BEHAVIOR BY COACHES, PARENTS, AND FANS MUST STOP

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There's an unfortunate trend continuing in Iowa and across the nation that must be addressed: the negative behavior of some coaches, parents, and fans at high school athletic events.

Far too often, we see yelling, harassment, disrespect, and even physical assault directed at high school referees, umpires, and other officials during and after games. Often, the harassment continues on social media. Perhaps you've witnessed it firsthand — or even engaged in it yourself.

Not only is this behavior unacceptable and embarrassing, but it's also having serious consequences on the future of high school sports.

At this time, some states and some of our own communities are experiencing a critical shortage of high school officials. The number one reason? You guessed it: the behavior of coaches, parents, and fans toward officials.

National surveys of officials report alarming statistics:

- 55% of officials say verbal abuse from coaches, parents, and fans is the #1 reason they quit.
- 59% don't feel respected.
- 57% think sportsmanship is getting worse.
- 84% feel officials are treated unfairly by spectators.
- 46% have felt unsafe or feared for their safety due to spectator, coach, administrator, or player behavior.

Sources: Officially Human: The State of Sports Officiating 2020; National Association of Sports Officials: National Officiating Survey

Officials are leaving the profession faster than new ones are entering it. This is a serious concern for us. If it continues, we may eventually see games and competitions canceled due to a lack of officials.

Unfortunately, bad behavior at high school athletic events has become normalized. It is almost expected that coaches, parents, and fans will disrespect the individuals serving as officials. We believe this culture must change now.

Everyone involved in high school sports — parents, coaches, administrators, fans, and the media — must turn their focus to supporting the student-athletes playing the games and away from criticizing the individuals officiating the contests. We believe most fans are positive, and we call on them to address, rather than ignore, the negative behavior of those around them. We must encourage those around us to remain respectful.

The bottom line is that, with no high school officials, there can be no high school sports.

The NFHS is partnering with state high school associations across the country to launch the nationwide #BenchBad-Behavior campaign. We will use the power of social media and other tools to help educate everyone about the importance of good behavior at high school athletic events.

You can help by being a positive role model at your high school's athletic events. And, if you think you have what it takes to be a licensed official, sign up today at <https://www.iahsaa.org/officials/become-one>, and help fill an urgent need here in Iowa.