



Alabama Reports Significant Reduction In High School Sports Ejections

Ejections Down 55% in Three Years Using STAR Sportsmanship Program

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Statistics from the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) confirm that Alabama has reported a significant reduction in high school sports ejections. Over a three-year period from 2005 to 2008, AHSAA reports 55 percent fewer player and coach ejections.

AHSAA Executive Director Steve Savarese credits the commitment of the state's education leadership, athletic directors and coaches in utilizing the mandated STAR Sportsmanship™ program as the vehicle for this remarkable improvement statewide.

Alabama schools began implementing the STAR Sportsmanship program three years ago in grades 3-12 as a tool for Sportsmanship and Character Education, Steroid/Drug Prevention and Critical Thinking Skills Development.

The interactive, online program engages students with graphically appealing digital games, sportsmanship heroes and current events from the real world of sports, role-playing exercises in real-life scenarios and modeling of consequences.

The Alabama State Legislature, Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) and the State Superintendent of Education took leadership roles in initiating state-sponsored access to the program beginning in 2005.

By the 2007 fall and winter sports seasons, 98.7 percent of ejections in Alabama high school sports were by schools not using the STAR program.

The same year, 92 Alabama schools achieved zero ejections and zero fines across all sports. The schools were recognized at the first Alabama Sportsmanship Banquet, hosted by AHSAA and Learning Through Sports, the company which publishes STAR Sportsmanship.

These successes led to an unprecedented mandate by Savarese and the AHSAA Board of Directors in April 2008. As an eligibility requirement for 2008-09, Alabama student-athletes competing at the high-school level must complete the STAR High School program prior to the first competition in their sport. All coaches must complete the STAR Coaching program by 2010. The AHSAA also recommended that junior high and middle school students complete the STAR program.



Since the mandate, ejections and fines have continued on a downward spiral. In fact, the AHSAA reports that fines imposed on high schools in 2008 decreased by 52 percent from the previous year, saving high school athletic budgets tens of thousands of dollars to be put to better use.

This decrease in total fines is due in part to the reduction in overall ejections, but the AHSAA also reduces fines for ejected players by 50 percent on the condition that they complete the STAR Sportsmanship “Take Two” Remediation program.

The new Take Two Remediation program for ejected players helps players evaluate their “Sportsmanship I.Q.” or “S.I.Q.”, reflect on better decision-making in the future, and get back in the game.

Seventy-six percent of this year’s ejected players completed the Take Two program, and responses prove they are absorbing valuable lessons to pass on to teammates.

General response shows players agree that sportsmanship follows you throughout your sports career. This rings true for many college sports hopefuls whose records of sportsmanship are carefully considered by recruiters.

Colby B. Jubenville, Ph.D., Director of the Center for Sport Policy and Research at Middle Tennessee State University honed in on the success of the AHSAA’s STAR Sportsmanship Initiative:

“Many areas of academic research, including child psychology, education psychology, and organizational psychology, all tell us the same things: to create behavioral policies that work, you must craft a clear message based on a set of core values, communicate that message constantly and clearly, and be consistent in follow-up and reinforcement,” said Jubenville.

“Obviously, the AHSAA did just that: they created a values-driven message, reinforced it through their use of the STAR Sportsmanship Program, and showed they meant business with sanctions for offenders.”

“Not only did they accomplish their objective of reducing ejections, but they positioned themselves as a leader in interscholastic athletic policy after whom other state high school associations should model themselves,” Jubenville concluded.

For more information on the STAR Sportsmanship Program and the new STAR Literacy Program, which combines online curriculum with professional athlete mentoring, call Learning Through Sports toll-free at 1 (866) 552-9192, or visit www.learningthroughsports.com.

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