



## **Mandated Sportsmanship Program Leads to Significant Reductions in Mississippi High School Sports Ejections**

### ***Ejections Down 44% for Players, 50% for Coaches***

*JACKSON, Mississippi – March 3, 2009* – The Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA) has reported unprecedented reductions in high school sports ejections statewide for the winter 2008 season. Player ejections declined by 44 percent from the previous year, and coach ejections declined by an incredible 50 percent.

MHSAA Executive Director Dr. Ennis H. Proctor credits the commitment of the state's education leadership, athletic directors and coaches in utilizing the mandated STAR Sportsmanship™ virtual training program as a vehicle for this remarkable improvement statewide.

“We are pleased with the dramatic decrease we've seen in ejections this year. Our primary goal is to produce good citizens for the future, and that means fair play and respect for others both on and off the field,” said Dr. Proctor.

“We thank the Mississippi Legislature for their support of this vision for Mississippi's future leaders. We pledge our continued partnership with Dr. Hank Bounds and the Mississippi Department of Education to work toward this goal of teaching all of our young people principles of good character,” Proctor continued.

Senator Videt Carmichael, Senate Education Committee Chairman, agreed, “Today, our young people are bombarded with negative influences portraying images of poor sportsmanship as the ‘acceptable’ thing to do. Finally, there's a program that teaches critical thinking skills that form the basis for improvement in attitudes and behaviors. We're seeing youth impacted by STAR Sportsmanship and carrying the lessons learned onto the playing fields, into their classrooms, homes and communities.”

“The STAR program is helping to mold Mississippi's young people into the responsible, respectable and motivated citizens that our State will depend on,” affirmed Senator Alan Nunnelee, Chairman of Senate Appropriations.

“I believe continuing with this program in years to come is a step in the right direction,” Nunnelee said.

STAR Sportsmanship took root in Mississippi in 2007 as a pilot program in 25 schools. In the initial year, STAR far surpassed expectations. Statistics from the MHSAA indicated that 99 percent of high school ejections in Mississippi in 2007 were from schools *not* participating in the STAR pilot program.



Moving forward to 2008, Dr. Proctor and State Superintendent of Education Dr. Hank Bounds decided to spread the impact of good sportsmanship across Mississippi by implementing STAR statewide.

In April 2008, the MHSAA Board of Directors issued a statewide sportsmanship mandate – unprecedented in the history of the MHSAA – requiring that all coaches, student-athletes, cheerleaders and dance participants in middle school, junior high, and high school sports complete the STAR Sportsmanship curriculum in order to meet eligibility requirements.

Since the mandate, ejections and fines have spiraled downward. In fact, the MHSAA reports that fines imposed on coaches in 2008 decreased by 35 percent from the previous year, saving high school athletic budgets thousands of dollars.

The decrease in total fines is due in part to the reduction in overall ejections, but Dr. Proctor has also lowered fines for coaches who completed the STAR Sportsmanship “Take Two” Remediation program after their first offense. Fines for second offenses cannot be reduced.

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

General responses from ejected coaches who completed the Take Two program show they would not repeat past offenses like arguing with officials and are ready to acknowledge responsibility for setting a good sportsmanship example for their players.

Responses from ejected players who completed Take Two show consensus that losing a good player to an ejection can cost a win for the team.

“The STAR program has taught Mississippi student-athletes how to deal with day-to-day problems like drugs and bullying and prepares youth to succeed in the 21st Century by strengthening leadership, teambuilding and social skills,” said Representative Johnny Stringer, House Appropriations Committee Chairman.

The STAR Sportsmanship interactive, virtual training 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.

For more information on the STAR Sportsmanship Program and the new Educational Athletics 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](http://www.learningthroughsports.com).

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