

Earlier this summer I had the pleasure to participate in the taping of a public-service announcement promoting good sportsmanship. It was really a fun project and I loved having the opportunity to carry a good message and spend some time with members of Ohio State's Sportsmanship Council, who participated in the PSA as well.

Good sportsmanship is something I think is essential to being a Buckeye fan. Period.

I've heard debates back and forth about how heated some of our rivalries are and how much animosity can flow between fanbases at times. Having heard all of that I've yet to hear a compelling argument that suggests treating other people poorly is ever warranted.

Personally, I have a big problem with people showing poor sportsmanship. I really don't like it when I hear our fans boo an opposing team when they come onto the field and it bothers me even more when I hear about altercations between different groups of fans.

Part of the reason it's always stuck in my craw is that as a player, as heated as our rivalry with Michigan could be, that game was never about hate. We wanted to beat them badly, no doubt about it. However, that desire never ever led me or my teammates to engage in the type of crass behavior that would reflect poorly on Ohio State.

When we played the Wolverines the goal was to play as hard as we possibly could. We had to leave it all out there because we knew they were going to do the same. But at the same time, we had to play fair. And when the game was over you walked across the field, shook their hands, and offered them the respect they deserved for testing your mettle on that day.

I saw Woody make that walk many times and I talked to him about that rivalry many other times. And although his dislike of Michigan is well-chronicled, don't ever let anyone tell you that he did not respect Michigan. He did, and if any player would have embarrassed him by showing poor sportsmanship on the field, I can promise you that player would be in for a week of practice he would not soon forget.

At the end of the day, these are games. We should never get to the point where a game leads us to behave in a way that would embarrass our families or our university. Being a good fan is something to me that is as much of a part of being a Buckeye as Skull Session or Script Ohio. It isn't something I expect out of some of our fans. I expect it out of all of them wherever they are.

I hope you will all carry this message with you throughout the course of the upcoming season. If you're watching in Ohio Stadium, at a game-watch party, or just with friends, show those people what Buckeyes are all about by exhibiting good sportsmanship in good times and bad.