



Iowa High School Athletic Association Iowa Cheerleading Coaches Association



TIPS for LEADING the CROWD in a POSITIVE WAY

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The following ideas are tips for cheer coaches and their cheerleaders to keep crowds going in a positive way at games.

TO THE CHEER COACH:

- **Teach & Practice expectations by working through game situations at practice.** The cheerleaders won't know your expectations until you teach them. Figure out cheers to use in certain game situations, then have the cheerleaders rehearse it at practice so it won't be new at a game. If the situation comes up during the game, they should use the appropriate cheer. Note the ideas to the cheerleaders below – again talking through situations and practicing the ideas helps your cheerleaders know your expectations.
- **Educate your student body** about expectations at a game. Work with your AD/principal with this if possible. Set up a special pep rally for “fan education,” or better yet, make fan education a part of every pep rally. Teach the students call back cheers, the cheer everyone should do if there is a “disagreeable call,” and good sportsmanship tips. Ask your administration to tell students what will NOT be tolerated like jumping on the bleachers or taunting the opponents or officials.
- **Educate your parents** about expectations at a game. This will work at a community pep rally or even at a pre-season parent's night practice. Be sure to talk to the head coach to get permission to do this, or ask your AD to arrange it for you. Ask parents to be leaders in the stands; this is something everyone can work on improving.
- **Keep it simple.** Cheers that the crowd loves can be repeated often.
- **Develop TRADITIONS.** By doing the same thing before the game starts, or at certain points in a game, will help your cheerleaders develop traditions that the crowd enjoys and participates in. This keeps the crowd following your lead and demonstrating great team support and sportsmanship.
- **Teach the following ideas to your cheerleaders.** You as a coach cannot cheer for them, but you can guide them in how they cheer.
- **Have a Game Plan.** Meet at halftime to make improvements the second half.

TO THE CHEERLEADERS:

- **Know the Rules of the Game for cheerleading AND the game in which you are cheering.** Cheerleading rules are laid forth for your safety. Respect them. You will gain a lot of respect from your team and your crowd by doing the appropriate cheer at the appropriate time. I.e. – Don't do a defense cheer when the team is on offense.
- **Be professional.** Chewing gum, talking and laughing with each other, ignoring your job (cheering & leading the crowd) will turn a crowd off. They will decide you don't care enough, so they won't follow.
- **Be approachable to the crowd.** Be at the game early to warm up and be prepared. Take time to talk to them or explain a new chant before the game begins. Tell the crowd when they've done well and followed you.
- **Use strong voices & make eye contact with the crowd.** This shows confidence. If the crowd can't hear the cheerleaders, they have no reason to follow. The same goes for eye contact. Look at everyone in the crowd. Not just a small group of people such as a group of friends. The crowd will feel ignored if you just cheer to a certain few.
- **Use signs & pompoms.** Use the poms and their colors as if it were a sign (raising one color in the air and then the next) if you would be doing a chant with your school's colors in it. Poms can attract a lot of attention and can be fun to help get the crowd fired up. Use signs so the crowd knows what to do or chant.
- **Repeat each chant at least 3-4 times.** It takes that many times for the crowd to catch on to what you are doing. Once they start chanting with the cheerleaders, continue 2-3 more times.
- **Chant while the team is in the huddle during football.** Starting a simple chant like "Go, Go, Go..." when the down is fourth and one and the team is in the huddle will have a lot more impact than during the play itself.
- **Start a chant before & while taking the floor for a time out during basketball.** Valuable time is wasted if cheerleaders wait, plus the emotion may have peaked and that is the opposite of what you want to have happen.
- **Cheer often:** at least every other play. This will not only keep you mentally in the game, but your crowd is more likely to follow. You should cheer between EVERY play when the game is very close or momentum is starting to switch.
- **Let anyone start chants when necessary.** During a game many of the chants are probably started by a captain or someone with more experience, but when the game is at a pivotal point, the most important thing is keeping the chanting going so anyone should be able to start a chant: even if you repeat chants. Practicing/Rehearsing this in practice will help everyone be ready for game situations.

- **Urge the Crowd by talking to them.** “Yell with us!” “Louder!” “I can’t hear you!” And then remember to praise the crowd when they follow your lead – thumbs up, clapping above your head, “Good job, Comet fans!” (use your mascot)

IF SOMEONE BECOMES UNRULY:

- **Cheerleaders can be the eyes & ears for administration.** While it is not the job of a cheerleader to remove someone from a game, they certainly should notify/alert administration or the cheer coach if someone is getting out of hand. It is not the cheer coaches’ responsibility to remove someone, but they are adult and verify what the cheerleader saw to the administration.
- **Start a traditional chant or a crowd favorite** when the call goes the other way and the fans disagree. This is where your crowd education pays off from a pep rally. Everyone being vocal in their own way only creates frustration for the crowd, the officials, your team & coaches. If the crowd follows the cheerleaders with a positive chant, the team knows the crowd is behind them, the officials move on (lose the frustration), and the voice of the crowd is still heard. This can be a challenge, but if everyone can buy into this idea, it really works.
- **Stay positive.** It is **NEVER** acceptable for a cheerleader to talk back/yell or make obscene gestures at an official, someone from the other school, or someone from their home crowd.