

A Game of Sportsmanship: A Marching Band vs. A Football Team

The stands rumbled as the placekicker took his spot in front of the football. My newly shined marching band shoes joined the stampede, matching the roar of the rest of the marching band. The band director was in a contortionist position, twisting his head so he could watch the game while his feet faced us to conduct whenever needed. The countdown in my head started, anxiously waiting for the ball to go through the goalposts.

Suddenly he kicked it. The ball went soaring for the extra point and the stands erupted into cheers. My band director snapped his head back to us and in a matter of seconds we were playing our high school song, loud and proud. The cheerleaders on the field danced to our music, performing jaw-dropping stunts and routines. We were smiling, laughing, and cheering our football team on; but we could not completely celebrate yet. There was one more thing we had to complete: the halftime show.

Again, the countdown in my head started; this time for the second quarter to end and for us to get on the field. I held my shako and plume tightly in my left hand and my piccolo in my other hand, shivering slightly from the cold. The piccolo players in the section stood beside me and the other instrumentalists lined up behind us. The sound of a shrill whistle and the opening of the looming gates tore me from my thoughts and the band entered the field.

A thread of fear came trickling in as I put my shako on my head. The marching band has faced issues with the sportsmanship the football players display towards the marching band. The bad sportsmanship we received every game discouraged us because many do not know how much effort we put into every performance. Marching is not like other sports with innings or quarters or periods. Our performances only last about seven minutes; and we have one

opportunity to show the audience what we have. There are no substitutions or timeouts or fouls. If someone gets hurt during practice or during the performance, the show must go on. We work as many hours and commit so much of our time into something we love.

However, it is not the crowd that drives our performances; it is our love for music and our determination of being one of the top marching bands in the state. With that, I put my piccolo in rest position and prepared to give the best performance I could. Dodging the towering plumes and shakos to catch a glimpse of the drum major, I was surprised to see a large crowd on the sidelines. There, sitting criss-crossed applesauce and smiling broadly, was our high school's football team. They all gave us thumbs-ups and cheered when the drum major took his position. When the performance started, I became completely focused. I could feel the highs and lows of the piece, my feet following perfectly with the rhythm. When we finished, I took a deep breath and I could distinctly hear the thundering applause of the crowd and the football team. It was definitely different from our usual shows; but I felt so much pride for our team as well as the football team for displaying such sportsmanship to support each other's victories. In the end, sportsmanship isn't a game to be won or lost. It's a game where everyone deserves equal amounts of respect and I think that tonight, both teams displayed exceptionally good sportsmanship.