

## Ramapo Boys Soccer Uses Social Media to Salute Opposing Players

Evan Baumgarten has seen quite a bit during his 36 years coaching the Ramapo boys soccer team, and that goes far beyond the more than 600 victories which place him among the state's all-time leaders, or the 13 Bergen County championships and seven NJSIAA state titles captured along the way.

Aside from the changes in training methods and game strategies since the time he began at the Franklin Lakes school during the 1980s, he's also seen how information about his team travels and is absorbed by those who follow it. And in more recent times, that means social media is now a part of how people view the Ramapo, or any high school team.

"Media has changed dramatically during my tenure as a coach," Baumgarten said. "The idea that parents, relatives and neighbors might read an article about a team in a printed newspaper is a fading concept. We also know that high school kids and families are very much in tune with social media."

Ramapo boys soccer, like hundreds of other high school sports teams in the state, has its own Twitter account. Each of those teams may have its own its own reason and style behind establishing an account and posting its news, but at Ramapo, the general theme boils down to one thing: Positivity.

That includes an aspect that goes beyond Ramapo itself, and fits into the intent of NJSIAA Sportsmanship Week (Oct. 18-24), which is sponsored by JAG-One Physical Therapy. Look closely at the team Twitter account (@ramapo\_s), and you'll see that after each game, it recognizes an Opposing Player of the Game.

"I wanted to find a way to use social media to promote our program in a positive light," Baumgarten said. "Not just wins and accomplishments, but in ways kids could be recognized for jobs well done.

"I decided in the spring that we would find ways to present our program via social media - primarily Twitter - that gave people associated with our program a look at the positive things going on. Being able to post pictures from team gatherings, upcoming news and the opponent player of the game has been a great addition to our program this season."

And in regard to saluting an opposing player, Baumgarten feels his program is acknowledging something that high school sports should always be about, yet is often taken for granted.

"With the opponent player of the game, it has occurred to me over the years that we need to respect our competition and show kids respect for the hard work that they put in for their high school programs," he said. "I have been privileged to meet and work with many high school players and coaches, and by saluting an opponent each game, we are promoting high school soccer and the best it has to offer. I think it is imperative that we continually highlight the best that interscholastic competition has to offer. Positively using social media to highlight an opponents efforts seemed to me a way to foster healthy competition and a collective spirit to make our high school game better."

The overall importance of sportsmanship as extension of competition is also essential to the long-time and extremely successful coach.

"The idea of an opponent or competition is a very layered concept to coach and teach," Baumgarten said. "While I am a very competitive person by nature, remaining humble about results of games is one of the essential skills we attempt to instill at Ramapo. We need opponents to compete against, and not only do I have relationships with many of the coaches in our county and area, but our players also play on club teams with kids from other programs. As a result, we know people at other high schools and have friendships with them off the field in many cases. High school soccer has to be more than just 'outcome-driven results,' and the idea of winning is not something we discuss at Ramapo. If we focus on the process, the results take care of themselves - being the best players and coaches we can be, working together as a team, and playing for something larger than ourselves. Part of the 'process' is mutual respect for our opponent and the work they put in."



Photo credit: NJ.com



**Ramapo Men's Soccer**  
@ramapo\_s

So many good things to say about @CPHS\_Soccer today. A fantastic opponent. Our opposing player of the game award goes to Kerry Quevedo. Well done Kerry! Great match. #RespectTheOpposition @HSSportsNJ @NJScam @BigNorthConBNC