

# **SPORTSMANSHIP**

By Charlie Whetu

**The true meaning of sportsmanship.** is defined as ethical, appropriate, polite and fair behaviour while participating in a game or athletic event.



As Coaches, we pride most of our success as a Coach on how well we teach players, the game skills, rules, knowledge and awareness of their chosen sports, only to find that we have created amazing athletes in the sport without teaching them the main advantages of playing sports, and especially if it's a team sport.

One of the main advantages of playing any sport is that it teaches us to cope with failures and disappointments that come our way, and what renewed efforts we as a team or individuals need to do in order to achieve success next time.

**"BE HUMBLE IN SUCCESS" and "BE GRACIOUS IN DEFEAT"**

**"BUT NEVER STOP LEARNING HOW TO BE A BETTER PERSON"**

Winning with respect is paramount at the younger age of sport as it tends to set those standards that will apply to the way we conduct ourselves as we grow from youngsters to adults.

When Coaching, the emphasis on winning appears by some Coaches to be the aim of how we see ourselves as being successful and respected. There is no doubt, as Coaches and players we should pride ourselves on winning because of the way we prepare and train to be successful. Great Coaches tend to look outside the norm to get a winning edge, we owe it to our teams to learn, accept and adapt, have ability to change average teams into great teams because of how they manage the players, and culture of a team. **"NEVER STOP LEARNING ABOUT THE GAME"**

Over many years as a Coach at both beginner local club age, and National level, I have witnessed many acts of sportsmanship, both excellent and disgraceful of some Coaches. I would like to outline my own personal thoughts and examples. Some of these are my own personal actions both good and bad. Some of the examples I mention, some of you will see yourselves as I saw myself.



**Coaches, remember when you allow or encourage poor sportsmanship, the whole team gets branded as one, teach your players, parents, and official about good sportsmanship.**

## **Acts of Poor Sportsmanship:**

**(1) Deliberate attempt to hit a batter:** I have heard a Coach advise an opposing team, Coach and player that they will deliberately pitch to hit the next batter. I have heard a Coach instruct their pitcher to hit the batter. This is an absolutely **"NO GO ZONE"** This in fact is a criminal offense if overheard and the player is injured through this deliberate act, the consequences can be very traumatic for those involved. My main concern is where a Coach has instructed a player to deliberately hurt another player, in some instances has been advised do it or get off. If this is you, our sport does not need you in our game.

All my years of Coaching Pitchers and Catcher, never have I allowed this, every pitcher has the right to challenge any Coach that want a batter to be deliberately hit by a pitched ball, because never ever during their battery sessions have they been Coached to hit a batter. I honestly believe that to get a batter out with quality pitching or choosing to strategically put them on base is a much better outcome.

**(2) Bat Flips:** This is one of the most arrogant and disrespectful displays of unsportsmanlike behaviour that needs to be an automatic out, there is no need for it in of our great game of softball, If you have been lucky enough to bomb the pitcher, well done, if you do a bat flip go back and look at your stats, you will notice you have lost more times than won. Leave bat flips to the baseballers

**(3) Super Coaching:** This is a term I first used when I went from the elite level of Coaching back to the Teeball and Modball age groups. I had no idea what was in store for me as these rules were a foreign language to me and I sought clarification of the rules from the young players and parents. If you elite Coaches want to learn how to be a super coach go back to the beginner levels because that's where the super coaches reign supreme. When I sought clarification from some of the Coaches on the rulings, my eyes were opened wide as to how easy it was to manipulate the rules to win and turn the game into a farce by deliberately causing teams to panic, to pressure these young kids to make errors through thinking they were doing right.

***(My comments may seem unfair, but through no fault of their own these coaches are often our lowest level qualified coaches who have volunteered to help because they have a child involved)***

We need parents to be involved with their kids and participate through involvement, with the introduction of Softball NSW Coaching Academy, utilisation of our many workshop presentations will assist both Clubs and Association in educating these beginner coaches on how to play the game in the right spirit without demoralising teams.

(Our sport is in a critical situation and our numbers are in decline – Annihilation of teams does not help. Unless we educate coaches on how to Coach Junior games with dignity and compassion this will continue. I believe there is a possible need to review some playing rule at State to minimise teams being demoralised.

My second year as Coach at Teeball level we played and lost every tournament we went in, to winning the State Championship that same year. Our greatest satisfaction was winning with respect to our opponents which didn't happen to us sometimes during the tournaments.

USA Thrashing Thailand 13 -0 in the 2019 soccer world cup. Why does this happen at the elite level.



#### **(4) Umpire Abuse:**

If the game is officiated by a Junior umpire, under no circumstance should anyone be permitted to challenge a Junior umpire decision. At this level of competition people most affected will be every junior involved in the game as an umpire, player, official, or spectator. Set good examples of sportsmanship for your players. Regardless of age or level, all umpires deserve to be respected as an integral part of our sport. As a Coach above Junior level you are required on behalf of your players to seek clarification where in the opinion of you and your players an incorrect decision has been made and will have an adverse effect on the result and your team. Be aware, regardless of the decision, once made that is the end of discussion, you had your chance now get on with the game or take the next step to protest if applicable.

How you address the umpire is most important, never try and tell the umpire what the ruling is, unless you know what rule they are applying. Take the time to know exactly what kind of open question/s you need to ask to achieve the outcome you desire. Be polite and leave your emotions in the dugout.



#### **(5) Negative Banter:**

Most teams will have some form of banter which is healthy if kept within the guidelines of fun and frivolity. Too often though, the banter targets individuals, or become a personal attack on others outside the teams, this has now become an issue of poor sportsmanship.

Where possible keep the banter to a minimum so that it does not become a distraction to the game.

#### **(6) The Game:**

There are softballers, who in the heat of the moment display unsportsmanlike behaviour when upset by a decision, result or an action, often emphasised verbally, expressions, body language.

##### **These are some behaviours of poor sportsmanship:**

- a) Strolling on and off the diamond. If don't have the energy, allow someone who does play.
- b) Displaying poor body Language at times during the game.
- c) Verbally questioning umpire decisions disrespectfully.
- d) Abuse of players, umpires and officials.
- e) Throwing of any equipment.
- f) Not putting in the effort as the rest of the team. Sulking.
- g) Not wearing or respecting the uniform in the appropriate manner.
- h) Not thanking the opposition or shaking hands at the end of the game.
- i) Failure to acknowledging the umpires after the game.



## **Acts of Good Sportsmanship:**

Batter hits a home run but gets hurt. Opponents help her around the bases.



Sarah Tucholsky of Western Oregon had never hit a homerun in her life. In her last game against Central Washington she hits her first ever home run, but in her excitement misses 1<sup>st</sup> base, on reversing to go back she tears a knee ligament. The two runners on base had already touched Homeplate. As Sarah could not return to touch 1<sup>st</sup> base due to her injury and none of her teammates could touch her the umpires had no option but to have Sarah replaced with a pinch runner and have the hit recorded as (2) run single hit instead of a homerun. As her Coach was about to replace her, Mallory Holtman for Central Washington asked the umpires if she and a couple of teammates could carry her around and touch each base ensuring the homerun counted.

### **Thoughts for Game Consideration:**

#### **Junior Competition only when - well ahead and opposition is considerably weaker:**

- 1) Consult the Coach, ask who the best fielders and agree to only hit to those players.
- 2) If ball is hit to an infielder, maximum of (1) base only, even on overthrows.
- 3) If ball is hit to an outfielder, maximum of (2) bases only. (Except on hit that passes outfielder)
- 4) No extra bases on errors.
- 5) This will minimise using our softball diamond as an athletic running track.
- 6) Declaration of offensive innings by offensive coach.
- 7) Modball, steals are only permissible if the ball is in front of the Catcher.
- 8) Advise opposition Coach you are going to bunt only and to bring their 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base closer. This allows them to field without fear of getting hurt.

### **Thoughts for Consideration: (Usually with 5 or 6 run lead) Each Coach sets their lead target?**

#### **Senior Competition only when - well ahead and opposition is considerably weaker:**

- 1) Where possible make changes to allow your weaker bench players to play.

#### **In consultation with opposition Coach:**

- 2) Advise opposition Coach that your team is not bunting unless game determines otherwise.
- 3) Advise opposition Coach that your team is not stealing unless game determines otherwise.
- 4) Advise opposition Coach you are going to bunt only and to bring their 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base closer.

Remember, many recent up and coming Coaches have absolutely no idea of these considerations when their teams are leading by big score as they have not been made aware and there is nothing that says they must adhere to these guidelines of fair play and good sportsmanship. It is only recognised as a typical old gentleman agreement.

Good Sportsmanship should be encouraged by every Coaches, we have a moral obligation to ensure that players regardless of which sport, need to adopt ethical, appropriate, polite and fair behaviour while participating in any game or athletic event.

**Winning without respect will never be recognised above excellent sportsmanship**