

Thoughts From The Dugout



RESPECT THE GAME

I had an epiphany while reading a quote by USC's football coach Pete Carroll. Carroll said the "football gods" cause the ball to bounce in your favor sometimes, in your opponents' favor on others. "You're going to have to overcome all that stuff. We're going to have to do it again," he said. "Maybe this week and maybe next week, the teams are going to have our number, or somebody's going to be hot and the wind is going to blow and things happen".

"That's why we talk all the time -- you have to respect the game."

This just hit me hard. I truly believe exactly what he was saying, but as I reread it over a second and third time.... OK, so I'm a nut, I love trying to get inside Pete Carroll's head and understand his methods / theories.... But I think so many times all of us, coaches, players and parents need to really look hard at these 3 very important words :

" Respect the Game ".

Respect

Coaches – every time we step on the field, do we really exemplify the respect for our opponent, respect for our players, respect for the umpires and respect for those who have stepped on the field before us. This great game we all love and hate is so fickle. One day we win, the next we lose. If we win, HOW do we win? Do we walk off the field gloating and rubbing it in the nose of the other team. Do we shove it in the face of the opposing fans. Do we post on message boards our record. Do we really win even if the scoreboard shows the other team might have scored more points during the game. I think it was John Wooden who said, " some days we don't lose, we just ran out of time". Do we really respect our players, or are they just a mere means to an end of satisfying our own ego's as we can no longer play the game ourselves. Do we remember that every time we step on the field and coach, it is an opportunity to lead by example to those young men who look at everything we do, even when we think their more worried about the hotties in the stands. As we run out to argue a questionable call or rant and rave about the idiots in blue, can in the next breath we really talk to our players about "worrying about what you can control".

Players – every time you step on the field, it is one step closer to the day you will no longer be able to step on that field and compete. How do you want that step to be taken. Everyone wants the satisfaction of winning. Winning feels good. But can you win while still retaining the Respect of your opponent. Can you still respect an opponent if the scoreboard says you didn't score more runs than they did that day. How will you respect the name on the front of that uniform. In most instances, there were guy's that wore that uniform ahead of you that gave YOU the opportunity to wear it today. They played the game with respect which is the reason while you wear it today, people will look to you with respect just because of the name on the front. How are you respecting them. And for those that will wear the uniform behind you, how will you respect THEM by leaving a legacy so that when they wear that uniform tomorrow, next year or 5 years from now, they will get the same respect that you do just for wearing it. How do you respect the name on the back. Even that ! In many of the days ahead of you, the name on your back will be a source of great pride. You should be proud of who you are. But, this comes with a price. The price that hopefully has been paid by those ahead of you. The price you pay for those behind you that will have to live with the legacy you leave behind by the way you respect it today. And one day hopefully, when you are in the stands and you get to look down on a little one who wears that same name, you will understand the pride that goes along with that price.

Parents – how do YOU respect the game. Every time you are in the stands or on the sidelines, you are a direct representative of the team / school that your child is playing for. Are you respectful of the opportunity your son has been given to wear that uniform. How do you respect those who have come before you and given you the opportunity to wear that cute little sweatshirt or hat with the team logo on it. How will you respect those behind you, who one day will hope to walk into a stadium and garner some level of respect just because of the logo they so proudly wear. Or will everyone look upon them as “ Oh, their one of them “. How will you respect your CHILD. Every time you stand up and yell at the umpire, it is almost assured that your son is sitting in the dugout putting his head down in shame. Or worse, you are telling them directly that it is OK NOT to respect the officials. How do you respect the coach ? In many instances, you have paid for this privilege, whether it is travel ball fees, tuition at school, or just athletic fees. How can you possibly expect your son to Respect the coach or opponents if there is no example coming from the stands. How can you even remotely expect your son to only worry about what he can control if during the entire ride home or dinner that night, you criticize the coach, the umpires, the opponent, fellow players or YOUR SON’s play.

THE GAME –

God, this is what we all forget so often. IT IS JUST A GAME. It SHOULD NOT be the embodiment of who we are. It will many times however reveal WHO we are. It is NOT the end of the world, just seems like it if we didn’t score enough runs that day. It is NOT the financing for my son’s college education. Oh yeah and think about this one..... Key word --- education, why do I want to go to college, to play baseball, NO – to get an education. It is NOT my personal retirement fund as god willing, my son will be a million dollar bonus baby and suddenly all MY WORRIES will be erased. He’ll take care of me when I get old. Remember, they’ll follow your example.

For those tiny select few, maybe one day it will be their JOB..... Getting paid to PLAY THE GAME..... but can you get paid and still Respect the Game? Respect the Fans? Respect the name on the Front of the Jersey? Respect the name on the BACK of the Jersey? I sometimes feel that this is forgotten. All those dollar bills come from somewhere. That “tight” ride you’ll be driving, the “dope” house you and your kids are living in and all the “blingage” is a direct GIFT from everyone sitting in the stands who has paid a huge amount just for the privilege of watching you play. You get to EARN a living playing THE GAME we all love. Those people in the stands don’t consider how they earn a living to be a GAME. Those same people are the one’s who buy the products you’ll endorse, which will bring you more cash. So when the spotlight is shining so bright and everyone wants a piece of you, remember why that desire even exists giving you something only a select few have – RECOGNITION – it is because of THE GAME. How will you Respect it?

So as we all walk out on the field this weekend, next week, next month or next year – we can all really think “ how will we RESPECT THE GAME “.