

PRACTICE

Building Character Through Soccer



Respect:

To treat others with a positive feeling of esteem or deference

Synonyms: courtesy, esteem, appreciation

Respect Story

Respect in a sports setting is demonstrated in the attitude of a player to their coaches, teammates, referees and opponents. Although the goal of a sports team is to win the game or event, how the game is played can be as important as winning or losing.

Late in April, 2008, two women's Division II collegiate softball teams, Western Oregon ("WO") and Central Washington ("CW"), were playing a conference doubleheader. Like many sporting competitions such as baseball, softball, football and soccer fields across the United States, not many fans attend. While the outcome will largely be unknown to millions, the results of that game is important for these players and fans. In this conference contest, the winner of these two games would likely be the winner of the Great Northwest Athletic Conference title. WO won the first game 8-1.

WO Senior, Sara Tucholsky, was an infrequent starter and batting 3 for 34 the season. She was small in stature at 5' 2" and never hit a home run in her entire playing career; never. Early in the game, tied 0-0, with 2 runners on, Sara did the impossible and launched a home run over the center field fence. In rounding the first base, in her excitement, she missed first base. Realizing her error, she turned around quickly to go back and tore her ACL. She fell in a heap unable to complete her homerun lap.

While Sara lay in pain, the umpire finally ruled that if any of Sara's coaches, trainer, or teammates helped her, she would be called out. Further, a substitution would negate Sara's only homerun and she would be given a two-run single. Substitution was the only possible choice for WO coach, Paula Knox.

Then this voice called out, "Excuse me, would it be okay if we carried her around and she touched each bag?" The question came from CW Senior Mallory Holtman who is in possession of almost all hitting records at WC. So in essence, the captain of the opposing team was asking if it would be okay to preserve their opponent's home run by helping Sara around the bases, jeopardizing her own team's chances of winning the game. Why would she suggest helping an opponent this way?

A player's respect for the game, an opponent, and her achievement helped to create a special moment. A moment far more memorable and honorable than a win might provide. Sara clearly hit the homerun with her own power and effort. But through a freak accident, Sara, injured and in pain, was unable to complete the trot around the bases. Mallory and CW teammate Liz Wallace carried Sara around the bases and lowered her to touch each base. Holtman offered explanations of her action, "She hit the ball over the fence.....just because it's the right thing to do. She was obviously in agony."

