

Win the “Right” Way

Is it possible to win a game and feel bad about it? Or maybe lose a game and feel good about it?

Several years ago, I had a conversation with a good friend and longtime mentor. Knowing he also had lost his father at a young age, I asked him, “How do I go about teaching our kids who my father was, considering he passed away from pancreatic cancer before they were born?” In his wisdom he shared, **“While we will lose people we love during our time on Earth, the only way they are truly gone is if we stop talking about them.** Tell your kids stories about your dad and they will always have a connection with him.” Therefore, with today being the 19th anniversary of my father’s passing, I am resharing one of those impactful stories. A story about a life lesson on integrity and **winning...the “right” way.** And in doing so, I hope to once again carry forward my father’s legacy in your hearts and minds as well.

A father’s lesson on integrity and winning the “right” way.

I still remember the game. Summer baseball, Dad was our coach, and it was the end of the season tournament in Brimfield. Winner moves on. Loser goes home. I don’t recall our record, other than we had a good team. And on that particular day, we were playing the best team in the league. A team that had a reputation for playing dirty and with questionable ethics.

In this tournament, the rules stated that every player was required to play a minimum number of innings. If a team failed to comply, they would forfeit the game. Dad was always meticulous about keeping the scorebook, knowing the rules, and tracking the stats. On that day, in the final inning, with our team in the lead, he walked up to the home plate umpire and requested a meeting with the opposing team’s coach. He proceeded to point out that they had not played one of their “not so stellar” players the required number of innings. And with it being the final inning, we were deserving of the win via forfeit.

The opposing coach proceeded to explain how it had been an accident, although to this day I don’t believe it. I vividly remember watching from my position at first base, the opposing coach getting upset and arguing, while Dad remained calm. Finally, the coach gained his composure, and they seemed to make an agreement. Everyone went back to their positions and the final inning continued. At the time I had no idea what the commotion was about, only to later learn that Dad had agreed to play the game instead of forcing a forfeit, as long as the underutilized player played the final inning. Unfortunately, our team made a couple errors, and we ended up losing the game. A heartbreaking end to the summer, and our baseball season.

On the car ride home I asked Dad, “What was that all about?” As he proceeded to share what had transpired, and the agreement he made, I got angry. “We should have won that game! They cheated!” I exclaimed. We all knew they played dirty, and, in my mind, this was evidence. If any team deserved to lose by being caught in the act, it was this team.

I’ll never forget Dad’s response, **“Yes, they did. But that is not how you want to win a game. You want to win it the right way.”**

At that moment, I had no idea the life lesson he was teaching. He was teaching me, at a young age, a life lesson that I am still striving to live out daily. **Integrity** mattered to my dad. Whether or not it risked upsetting those he loved, he consistently chose to not compromise his values. Win the “right” way because **your integrity is more important than the scoreboard.**

While I didn’t fully grasp the life lesson then, it is perfectly clear today. My dad’s values live on today in me, our firm, and what Nikki and I attempt to teach our kids. He may be physically gone, but his memory continues through the stories I tell.

INTENTIONAL LIVING CALL TO ACTION: Share a story, or life lesson, you learned from a parent or grandparent to keep their memory alive.