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may the best team win

fiction
by Marie Spadell

Bzzzz - "The final score is Ogontz 54 - Hazleton 52."

Sure, on paper it's obvious that Ogontz is the most talented team, yet I always thought that healthy competition consisted of many other variables. Playing as a team, attending all practices, respecting your coach, and never giving up are equally important in earning the label of "winner". So why isn't the team that best exhibits its traits also considered "a winner"?

The coaches shake hands and exit the gym, followed by the players and fans. This was a tough game, both physical and hard-fought. I'd like to believe that the better team was the victor; however, that's not how I see it. Of course, I may be biased, having been right at the "heart" of the tryouts as well as the practice sessions for the Hazleton team. I feel as though I've gone through the growing pains right along with the team.

The Ogontz team jubilantly runs to the locker room, eagerly awaiting their next opponent. It's off to State College for the playoffs and championship games now. Throughout the season, Ogontz has beaten their opponents by an average of twenty-eight points. Tonight they struggled for the victory, not playing up to par and actually looking unconcerned and lackadaisical. If Ogontz had played with only half of the Hazleton team's zest, they could have doubled their score.

As a result of their team being labeled "a winner", they play their games to standing-room-only crowds. It's unfortunate, though, that their sports-minded fans are ignorant to their team's negatives: the dirty play that, often goes unnoticed, the attempts at humiliating their weaker opponents, and the snide, disrespectful remarks.

Ogontz ends the regular season undefeated and will be celebrating on their bus ride home. Tomorrow's newspaper will headline their accomplishment, and they'll receive kudos from their peers. Ogontz is on to the playoffs for the fifth year in a row.

Hazleton's team stroll to the locker room with their heads down. The season is over for them, this being their last game and probably the one that winning would have meant the most. The guys played their hearts out tonight and gave 110%. The rookie team competed fairly throughout the season, but the combination of inexperience and lack of

height contributed to their disappointing 6 & 12 record this year. They'll mentally torture themselves wondering what they should have done differently.

Once you're labeled a loser, there isn't much fan support, and the Hazleton home games had few spectators. It's too bad that people can't be as interested in a team that's exhibiting the true fundamentals of sportsmanship and competition, as they are in who has the higher score when the final buzzer sounds.

The team will be down-in-the-dumps for awhile, and I wish I could yell, "Hey guys, cheer up, you were the better team tonight!" I suppose nothing changes the statistics, though, and all they say is - LOSING SEASON! A small article will appear in tomorrow's newspaper making note of the game's outcome, but overlooking the qualities or what good competitors the players were.

And of course, the comment on campus will be, "Lost another one, huh?"

It's unfortunate that society places so much emphasis on "winning" since many equally admirable qualities are overlooked in the quest for victory.

So, ask me what coach's neck I'd rather be the whistle hanging around--Hazleton's, of course, the better competitor!

Hey coach, wait up!

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