

An Amazing Example of Sportsmanship (Second Place 2001)

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Ever since I can remember, I have played many sports, anything from tee-ball to gymnastics. Because of this, I have witnessed many acts of sportsmanship. Whether it was a runner stopping to help an opponent in the middle of a cross-country race, a soccer player who helped up the girl who fell while fighting for possession of the ball, or just a simple “good game” after a long competition, in my mind nothing has come close to the example I am about to give.

You may expect it to have had occurred during a pro game or a collegiate competition. In fact it did not even take place at the high school level. It actually took place at my little brother’s fourth and fifth grade Little League game.

It was a nice spring afternoon and I was unhappily sitting on the old wood bleachers at the dusty Little League field, behind our town’s police station. Being in sixth grade at the time, I felt that I was way too cool to be attending this juvenile game of baseball, which my mother dragged me to. Little did I know that just one classy act performed by a fourth grade boy would influence my life the way it has.

It was a long game, as most of those games tended to be. My brother’s team was losing even though they had the best pitcher in the league. He truly was an excellent pitcher; he threw better than most of the eighth graders at the time. It was probably the last inning and the team’s coach let the little boy on the team who had Cerebral Palsy get up to bat. It took a lot of courage just for him to play, but to get up to bat was a whole other story because he needed someone to run for him.

When the little boy who was pitching saw that this boy was up to bat, he looked over to his coach as if to ask for permission and walked to about halfway between home plate and the pitcher’s mound. He did this even as his teammates, being typical fourth and fifth grade boys, yelled, “Strike him out.” Then he took the ball and lightly tossed the ball underhand to the batter until, on the third try, he got a hit and a runner on base.

This boy did this despite the fact that his team was losing, and it would have been an easy out. He

did not even cave into the peer pressure that his other naïve teammates put on him. His team even ended up losing the game, but it did not seem to matter to him.

I know that everyone in the stands was amazed by the maturity of this boy's act. I know that when I look back on that moment, I try to remember that if a ten year old boy can put aside his pride long enough to help someone feel good about themselves, I should be able to do the same. In today's world it is very difficult to stop being so selfish and give to those who need the help.

I still know people, even grown ups, who would not have had the compassion to do what this little pitcher did.