

Dawn of a New Era in Sportsmanship

Is it a dawn of a new era in sportsmanship in professional sports? I hope so! Competition often brings out the worst in athletes, but not on Wednesday night, June 2 in baseball. We all have seen or read about the mistaken call that prevented Tigers' pitcher, Armando Galarraga, from a perfect game. Did he roll his eyes; throw his glove on the ground and cuss out the umpire? No. As they say, "Actions speak louder than words." Galarraga's actions speak volumes on sportsmanship. Not only did his actions demonstrate the right behavior but also first-base umpire Jim Joyce's noble admission of making a mistake on his call. To observe such grace from Galarraga is the lesson we, as coaches, are always trying to teach to our athletes. To see it in real life being played out on national TV can make an even bigger impression on our cheerleaders.

Coaches and parents should take the time to show their cheerleaders the articles and videos of this event. It was a big deal for Galarraga. He would have gone down in baseball history as the 21st pitcher to have ever thrown a perfect game. The first reaction of most would have been irate behavior and frustration over such a big error. Instead we all got a visual lesson in sportsmanship. First-base umpire apologized for making a bad call to Galarraga and the Tiger pitcher forgave him. Galarraga went on to say in an interview afterwards, "...He (Joyce) really feel bad. He probably felt more bad than me. And nobody's perfect and we'll all human. I really give that guy a lot of credit to tell me, 'I need to talk to you'. You don't see an umpire after the game come out and say, 'Hey, let me tell you I'm sorry,' That don't happen..."

This is a real-life teachable moment. Take the time to show the historic moment to the cheerleaders and have a discussion about reactions, sportsmanship, grace, admitting mistakes and subsequent behaviors. Let the cheerleaders express their opinions and thoughts. Ask them how it relates to them while they are cheering at games and competing at competitions. Ask them about past events where there were unsportsmanlike behaviors or mistakes that happened. Get their opinions on how it should have happened. Through this discussion cheerleaders will learn many valuable lessons that will carry-on not only into cheerleading but also throughout their lives.



Ferndale and Lynden cheerleaders working together at a football game.

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