



TEACHING for TOMORROW

Do you remember when?

Article by Al Herback

Little League Baseball Canada's National Coach

As baseball is about to embark on the ball diamonds of Canada within the next few weeks, I feel it only appropriate that we have an article written for us by the umpire association led by Karen DeCarle, Alberta District 3 Umpire in Chief. Karen has spent many hours and years on the diamond for the benefit of our children of all ages. With her vast knowledge of the game, it is a pleasure to send along her feelings and passion for the game through the following article.

"You were a kid. You had never picked up a bat or a ball and you wore your glove on your head. You picked daisies in the field. You tried hard to learn the game and doing your best was the most important thing. It was okay if you didn't catch the ball or hit -- no careers in the making were won or lost. Baseball was fun. The more you practiced, the better you got until you hit that double or stretched it to a home run and slid in to score. You were proud of your accomplishments. Some even decided to pass on the love of the game and carry forward the life skills learned through coaching. Coaching a successful team made you feel good and future leaders were made. Even when the game didn't go so well, you could still be proud of how hard everyone tried and the happy ending was that you could come back next time and try again to be a bit better.

Somewhere in that game was an umpire.

Being an umpire is the most courageous of all roles on the diamond. They are on duty every moment of every inning and have the responsibility to ensure the game is played fairly and in a sportsmanlike way. Without the umpire, the game would be difficult to play. Coaches would need to fill the role. Umpires willingly take on the extraordinarily difficult task of enforcing the rules even when unpopular and must please everyone all the time which is not possible for any human to do so. The most amazing thing of all is that many of these umpires are kids!

Just as players, coaches, managers, and scorekeepers need to learn, so do umpires. Whether it's a pitch coming in or a play unfolding, things happen quickly and mistakes are sometimes made. Even when a mistake isn't made, the desire to win often results in player, coach, or parent's dissatisfaction with a call. It is forgotten that even Major League umpires get the call wrong from time to time. The 'best seat in the house' becomes a place of fear and the sinking feeling that they are not good enough overshadows the love of the game. For many, the barrage of negativity results in them shedding tears and wanting to quit. No child should ever be made to feel that they are not worthy!

No matter where someone fits on the diamond, mistakes are okay. Just as we support the players as they learn and get better, we need to lift the umpires up too. The leadership they show by getting in the game and taking charge should be celebrated. When they do a good job, tell them. If they make a mistake, help them to learn in a kind and respectful way. They will thank you for it and it will help them perform better and with confidence. It will keep them coming back the next game or season which allows everyone to play. Most importantly, any great leader needs to start somewhere.

Never discount the significance that you can make in a child's life by helping them feel good about themselves no matter where they fit in. If you lift a child up and show you believe in them, they will meet or exceed your expectations - and maybe even change the world! Remember, it is just a game for all of us."

Thank you so much for your insight to the life of an umpire, Karen.

You are all welcome to send along a message you would like us to use in a future newsletter. There are many great topics that could be used regarding Little League baseball. I can be reached by emailing al.herback@gmail.com.