ETHICS IN SPORTS

We generally make too much of winning. Let`s face it: someone always has to win; that is the nature of competition. But the mere fact of winning doesn`t make you great.
-- Wilt Chamberlain, basketball great (1936-1999)

The most important thing is to love your sport. Never do it to please someone else -- it has to be yours. That is all that will justify the hard work needed to achieve success. Compete against yourself, not others, for that is who is truly your best competition.
-- Peggy Fleming Jenkins, champion ice-skater and sportscaster (b. 1953)

I love the game. It`s fun to play, period. I love running around and getting sweaty. I love trying to lead my team. I love facing the challenge of another team that`s better.
-- Jamila Wideman, WNBA basketball player (b. 1975)

When all is said and done, it`s not the shots that won the championship that you remember, but the friendships you made along the way.
-- Unknown

I don`t think I can play any other way but all out... I enjoy the game so much because I`m putting so much into it.
-- George Brett, Hall of Fame third baseman (b. 1953)

*************News and Views**************

Win-At-All-Costs Behavior May Be a Disease

Does that yelling fan in the stands, the one who hates losing more than his child does, have a mental disorder? Today, psychologists increasingly think so, and they`ve given it a name: hypercompetitiveness.

Hypercompetitors tend to think "their self-worth is contingent on winning," said John Tauer, a psychology professor at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, in a Los Angeles Times special
report. "When they start any activity, their first thought is: `I need to win.`"

And, since drive matters, they can succeed in many walks of life. Yet ironically the need for victory can undermine achievement in sports. And other pitfalls lurk. Hypercompetitiveness can splinter families, sabotage careers, and isolate its sufferers, and it boosts the chance of road rage, eating ailments, depression, and other problems. The need to win can be a formula for trouble.

What makes people hypercompetitors? Psychologists have identified two factors: focus on external rewards, such as status, and desire to control others.

The Quest for Trophies
The source of satisfaction -- yourself or the world`s response -- is crucial. In a 2003 study of 319 young athletes in Texas, published in the Journal of Psychology, researchers sought to tell from questionnaires whether an athlete would show sportsmanship. They found that the best predictor of good sportsmanship was zest for inner goals, such as greater self-esteem, sense of mastery, maximized potential. Players who craved external rewards like trophies were more often hypercompetitors. They were also less effective overall, since they lacked self-discipline and lost concentration more easily.

For instance, Lea Antonopolis-Inouye, a former pro tennis player, says greats like Steffi Graf and Chris Evert aimed for stellar performance more than victory. "The most successful athletes I have known have absolutely no irrational competitiveness," she says.

The Yen for Control
A trophy mentality is not the only root of hypercompetitiveness. According to studies by psychologist Richard Ryckman of the University of Maine, hypercompetitors yearn for "power and control over others," and show less care and respect for people. "The gist of this kind of competition is self-aggrandizement at the expense of others," Dr. Ryckman says. They are more aware of their victories as defeats for other people.

Some hypercompetitors -- think Pete Rose in sports and Enron CEO Jeff Skilling in business -- go too far and sabotage their success by extreme behavior. The need to win can darken lives in other ways. A 2002 study by Dr. Ryckman and others in the Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology found that, in romantic relationships,
hypercompetitors "reported lower levels of honest communication with the partner, greater infliction of pain on him or her, stronger feelings of possessiveness, higher levels of mistrust, stronger needs to control their partner, lower ability to take their perspective and higher levels of conflict." As a result, they can face burnout, divorce, animosity from children and depression.

The Preamble to the Arizona Accord states that athletic competition "is a symbol of a great ideal: pursuing victory with honor." But when you need victory, you care a lot less about how you get it. Hypercompetitors are a problem for everyone, including themselves. [Los Angeles Times, 11/28]

--------School-Based Sports--------

Schools Ban Handshake in Name of Sportsmanship

In a controversial move, worried principals in five rural Virginia high schools have forbidden handshakes after sports contests.

In the past, says Larry Shumaker, principal of Northumberland High, "there have been some instances in the past where the handshaking has gotten a little bit out of control, with kids spitting on each other [and] kicking each other," said Larry Shumaker, principal of Northumberland High. "We`re just trying to prevent situations from occurring before they occur."

Traditionally, players have formed two opposing lines and shaken hands, occasionally tossing in a "Good game!" But Rappahannock High principal Jack Cooley asked, "You got beat 56-0 and you want someone to tell you `Good game` 35 times? If you go through the line, there`s a possibility that somebody` s gonna push somebody, hit somebody, and it` s going to be a big problem at the end of the game."

Of course, coaches have an array of other disciplinary measures to deter such events. "As long as we keep dumbing down what these students have to live up to, then our society will never get any better," said parent Vincent Haynie. "They` re taking away the opportunity for these kids to step up. It` s ridiculous."

Principle Two of the Accord states that sports leaders must "promote sportsmanship and foster good character by teaching, enforcing, advocating and modeling" the Six Pillars of Character. Banning the
handshake obviously doesn’t build character. It’s a stopgap. It may reduce symptoms like pushing for awhile, but the basic problem will remain and symptoms will pop up elsewhere. True prevention, the kind principal Shumaker referred to, starts at the bottom and works in many spheres. [Washington Times, 11/11]

------------Collegiate Sports------------

Buy-a-GPA Service Helps Star Athletes Into College

Some of today’s high school athletes are pumping up more than their muscles. They’re inflating GPAs, thanks to a gap in NCAA regulations.

To qualify for athletic scholarships, athletes need a certain combination of GPA and SAT score. But the rules don’t nail down which high school GPAs count.

That’s where University High comes in. When C-average athletes enroll at this correspondence school, their GPAs balloon. And they count.

Lorenzo Ferguson is a defensive back at Auburn who boosted his GPA from 2.0 to 2.6 using University High. "You take each course you failed in ninth or 10th grade," he said. "If it was applied math, you do them on the packets they give you. It didn’t take that long. The answers were basically in the book."

According to the New York Times, 14 graduates of University High now play Division I football.

The school has three employees and consists of two rooms on the third floor of a south Miami office building. Its diploma costs $399 no matter how many courses you take.

NCAA president Myles Brand will investigate the issue. "We see the problem accelerating," he said. "We want to do something about it."

Principle Six of the Arizona Accord states that athletes must "observe and enforce the spirit as well as the letter of the rules." University High is a classic example of a breach of this principle. [New York Times, 11/27/05]

------------Olympic Sports-----------
Juicing May Mean Jail at Winter Olympics

Should sprinter Ben Johnson have gone to prison for drug-cheating at the 1988 Seoul Olympics?

Under a 2000 Italian law, any Ben Johnsons caught at the Turin Winter Olympics could sit in a cell from three months to three years. And sentences grow harsher if the drug can damage an athlete`s health.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is trying to convince Italy to exempt Olympic athletes. "You think American professional hockey players, paid in the millions, will risk being put in handcuffs to come play in Turin? Come on, let`s be realistic," said IOC member Mario Pescante.

But the Italian Senate has strongly opposed special treatment for Olympians, and Health Minister Francesco Storace said, "The thought of rewarding sports champions by de-penalizing the use of drugs at the Turin Olympics is unthinkable." Others have wondered why the refusal of doping athletes to attend would bother anyone.

To safeguard the integrity of sports, Principle Fourteen of the Accord states that athletic programs must "demand compliance with all laws and regulations." But current IOC punishments have not stopped doping, and the fraud is an offense against all of society. Jail time seems to reduce accounting fraud, and we may need similar penalties for sports fraud as well, especially when the rewards for victory are so high. [Los Angeles Times, 11/16; Associated Press, 11/1]

******* Sportsmanship Reader Quiz*******

Are You a Hypercompetitor?

How can you tell if you`re a hypercompetitor? Dr. Richard Ryckman developed a Hypercompetitive Attitude Scale in 1990. Test-takers respond to its statements on a five-point scale, with "never true of me" at 1 and "always true of me" at 5. Samples include:

-- I can`t stand to lose an argument.
-- I compete with others even if they`re not competing with me.
-- If I can disturb my opponent in some way to get the edge of competition, I will do so.
-- I find myself being competitive even in situations which do not call for competition.

While four questions are not enough to conclusively determine where you stand, they can give you a strong clue, especially if many of your answers are 5`s.

**************You Make the Call***************

Should pro athletes caught taking performance-enhancing drugs go to jail?

To take the poll, go to: http://www.charactercounts.org/sports/

***************In Their Own Words***************

I don't see it happening unless every NBA player is given a stipend to buy clothes.
-- Marcus Camby, Denver Nuggets, on the NBA`s new dress code [Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, 10/19/05]

After people see it, we hope to go out and seek other deals.
-- Kurt Robinson, founder, No Sweat Wipe, a mop company, on its deal to place ads atop the mops used to dry the court at Staples Center [Los Angeles Times, 11/2]

Everything Chad Johnson does is positive.
-- Chad Johnson, receiver, Cincinnati Bengals [Los Angeles Times, 11/14]

******Sportsmanship Principle of the Month******

Principle Fifteen: The Competence Principle

In a story that received national publicity, videotape recently caught an assistant football coach in San Pedro, California, moving the down marker to benefit his team. Yet coach Manuel Douglas of Harbor City Narbonne High, which shot the tape, said, "It was not my intention when I first discovered it to cause this frenzy. I`m not excusing or condoning what [the assistant coach] did, but [the media] crucified this guy."
Cheating is more than dishonest. It’s inept. It can so embarrass individuals and organizations that it’s intrinsically foolish. That’s one reason why Principle Fifteen, in laying out the areas of essential coach competence, says a key field is character-building, "including techniques and methods of teaching and reinforcing the core values comprising sportsmanship and good character." Coaches can hardly teach character when they don’t display it themselves.

Nearly 50 influential leaders in sports issued the Arizona Sports Summit Accord in 1999 to encourage greater emphasis on the ethical and character-building aspects of athletic competition. There are youth/interscholastic and collegiate/Olympic versions. To read the full texts, go to: http://www.charactercounts.org/sports/accord.htm

*****From the Gold Medal Standards for Youth Sports*****

The Need for Surveys

How well is your sportsmanship program going? You may have an idea, but you can’t really know what’s happening throughout it on your own. That’s why you need effective evaluation. Indeed, it’s so important that Section 8 of the Gold Medal Standards, in its entirety, says, "A Gold Medal Youth Sports Program provides for annual surveys of parents, players, coaches and officials to assess how well the program is achieving its mission and objectives. Feedback from the evaluations is used to improve the program."

The Gold Medal Standards are a common framework of requirements that all youth programs should meet. To read about them, and the summit that led to them, go to: http://www.charactercounts.org/sports/youth-sports-summit.htm

*****From the Game Plan for Amateur Basketball*****

One Key to Success in the Classroom

Inner motivation elevates an athlete’s game in sports, and it can improve performance in class as well. Section 3.6(b) of the Game Plan captures this fact, in urging teacher-coaches to emphasize inner scholastic goals. They "should stress the importance of each student-athlete meeting his or her academic potential," it says, "and not merely express concern about eligibility to play."
The Game Plan for Amateur Basketball is, as NABC executive director Jim Haney describes it, a "serious effort by many of the most influential people in amateur basketball to outline a realistic game plan to address some of the most serious issues facing the game." To read the whole Game Plan, go to: http://www.charactercounts.org/sports/gameplan-basketball.htm

*******From the Ultimate Sportsmanship Tool Kit*******

The Ultimate Sportsmanship Tool Kit is an all-in-one resource to help athletic programs achieve sportsmanship and character-building goals. It comes in two versions -- youth and high school -- and covers everything from mission statements and codes of conduct to evaluation tools and ideas for rewarding players and coaches.

Security Plan Checklist

The Tool Kit offers this checklist to help you prevent ugly incidents in the stands:

-- Distribute a code of conduct to parents and spectators. It should include behavior expectations at games and the consequences for violations. Leagues may consider instituting a "no-boo" rule.

-- Create and agree upon league-wide an outline of the coach's responsibility to control his/her own behavior, as well as that of athletes and parents/spectators.

-- Train security personnel to watch for unruly behavior and to support coaches and game officials in dealing with it.

--- If onsite security personnel are not affordable or available, the league should work with local law enforcement to encourage their increased presence at games.
--- Work out emergency signals (or other means of communication) with local law enforcement so that unruly behavior can be quickly and clearly identified. Inform administrators, coaches, game officials and league-appointed monitors of this code and when to use it.

-- Provide security plan handouts and code of conduct handouts for parents/spectators. Consider printing these on wallet-sized cards and giving them out at each game.
-- Have league-appointed monitors (volunteers or official staff) at each game, trained to watch for unruly behavior and to support security personnel, coaches and game officials in dealing with misbehaving spectators.

-- Clearly post notices on playing fields to remind spectators of behavior expectations.

-- Write pregame announcements prior to games.

For more about the Ultimate Sportsmanship Tool Kit, go to: http://www.charactercounts.org/Merchant2/merchant.mv?Screen=CTGY&Store_Code=CCMP&Category_Code=10