



Cheating in Sports or in Life's Challenges Diminishes Impact of Winning

By Bill Gosse

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Over the last few weeks there have been a couple of troubling incidents in the world of sports. Both involve cheating.

The McLaren Formula One racing team was fined \$100 million for using stolen information to gain an advantage. The “Beli-cheat” circus unfolded when New England Patriot’s Coach Bill Belichick was implicated in a scandal involving illegally videotaping the New York Jets’ defensive signals to get an edge.

I don’t watch racing much, so I’m not sure about all the intricacies of that sport. Belichick’s Patriots have won quite a few professional football games over the last several years, including three Super Bowl championships. Seemingly, he had everything going for him, including an eventual induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Now he is found guilty of violating an NFL rule, with other implications possibly surfacing. Certainly this discovery opens the door to many questions. Were the championships won dishonestly? How long have they been doing this? Are other teams doing it as well? The final question is the most important: Does anybody really need to cheat in sports?

As these issues have been bantered about on sports talk shows, a phrase has surfaced which I simply despise: If you’re not cheating, you’re not trying. The pure thought of anyone accepting this phrase as his or her mantra rocks me to the core.

As a WIAA football official, I have heard stories about high school coaches teaching their players how to “bend the rules”, advising that it’s not cheating until they get caught. Just about every Friday night, coaches will warn our officiating crew in our pregame visit about shenanigans the other team might try.

When coaches or players employ questionable tactics, it simply demeans the game – for any sport. When integrity is sacrificed in the name of winning, fans aren’t impressed, parents aren’t proud and players don’t get a true sense of accomplishment because the victory is tainted.

My brother John was a 2nd Team all-America football player for Lakeland College in the mid-1980s. In his playing days, he was a 6'4" defensive end who weighed around 260 pounds.

My brother played the game with honesty and integrity, and with great effort. He taught me about determination and persistence – always playing to the final horn. He looked for signs of weakness from his opponent, not from their sideline. He exemplified that going half-speed wasn't an option and that you beat someone by out-working him on the field.

He would revel in the strategy of attacking his opponent extra hard at the beginning of the first and third quarters, trying to intimidate his opponent. His goal was to initially wear them down mentally, then dominate them physically.

This strategy and his ability even produced a game where he had 6 quarterback sacks. Upcoming battles against all-conference opponents would be prepared for by countless hours of practice and lifting weights – not figuring out a way to steal information or bend the rules.

For his dedication and determination, my brother was named a member of the Lakeland College Athletic Hall of Fame. That's what happens to people who succeed by doing it the right way.

Last week, my "little" brother lost his greatest battle by passing away at too young an age.

It wasn't because he quit or cheated, it was because he faced an opponent he just couldn't beat.

I am proud to say he finished his great game of life playing fair and square, just like he did in sports.

That's the way it should be.