

THE POLITICS OF SPORTS FIELD MANAGEMENT

PART 2 OF A SERIES

When discord strikes, both sides own the problem. Let's look at the part we own.

By Don Savard, CSFM, CGM

When Sports Field Managers and their customers have disagreements resulting in communication breakdown, there are no winners. Let's look further into the dynamics of Human Relations.

Good Human Relations skills begin with Respect. The American psychologist Abraham Maslow described human self esteem needs — the need for respect from others and the need for self-respect. Without the fulfillment of these needs, Maslow suggests, an individual feels discouraged, weak and inferior. Self respect begins with honest self knowledge and self awareness. Respect from others often entails recognition, acceptance, and appreciation. Respect from others must be earned. Self respect, on the other hand, is an inside job.

Self respect begins with self care. Good self care results in good self control. Occasionally, we all find ourselves hungry, angry, lonely or tired. When we feel any of those ways, we are emotionally vulnerable and our self control can be compromised. It is good to take care of ourselves. If our needs are neglected, we are not at our best. And if we are not taking care of our interests, how can we take care of others?

Respect for others is based on self-respect and follows the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." It is the value that makes the world a more decent and civilized place.

But this is where it starts to get sticky. The world is not always a more decent and civilized place. Things happen. People disagree. Conflicts occur.

Have you ever had this happen to you? You are in the middle of preparing your field for an event. A team comes out and starts using your field while you are working on it. You approach the coach and explain what you are doing. In spite of what you say, not only does the team stay, but they damage the field as well.

The natural reaction to this type of conflict is ANGER and the anger could take the form of:

- Retaliation
- Us against them
- Negativity
- Poor Attitude
- Defensiveness
- Distrust
- Passive aggressive behavior
- Despair

These feelings are none other than good old fashioned Self Righteous Anger. If you look at this anger closely you might find that it is driven by good old fashioned self centered fear.

Self centered fears include:

- Being made look foolish or be embarrassed.
- Being made to something that you don't want to do.
- Being afraid that it will cost you something.

(continued on page 14)

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(continued from page 12)

- Being afraid that you will lose something.
- Being afraid others will be mad at you.
- Being afraid that you will lose your personal power or control.
- Being afraid that you are not enough.

The more you think about it the angrier you could become. You could take it out on somebody, the coach, or a coworker or family member. Or, you might internalize your feelings only to have them come out another way. Have you ever indulged in a supersized portion of self pity or plotted how to get even? These behaviors waste a great deal of personal time and energy.

Ask yourself what could have done first to have avoided the situation? Did you do your part first by:

- Checking a schedule to see if anybody else had a legitimate right to the field?
- Communicate properly to the stakeholders your plan to be on the field?
- Properly request that they stay off the field?

The issue is not what the coach or the team did; the issue is how you handled it and how you will handle it next time. Remember, being the victim is tiresome.

Next issue: Power and Control –Does anyone really have any?

Don Savard is a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) and Certified Grounds Manager (CGM); Director, Athletic Facilities and Grounds, Salesianum School; and President, SFMANJ.

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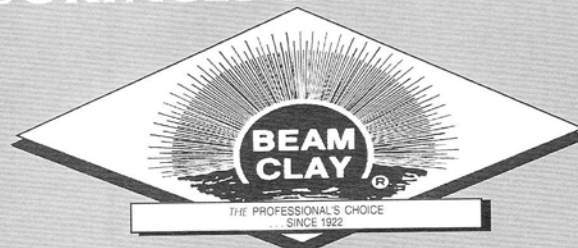
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