

As Seen in The Mirror's
SPORTS REFLECTIONS
 of Athletes and Events

New Bern's Sunday school league is getting plenty of bad publicity these days. Unfortunately, some of it seems to be deserved.

Criticism has stemmed from the behavior of adult spectators, rather than the actions of small fry participating in the thrilling, hotly contested games that have characterized the season now in progress.

Biggest squawk to date stemmed from a recent occasion when one of the youngsters needed to retire only one more batter to achieve a no-hitter and blank the opposing ball club.

Grown-ups supporting the team that was trailing by a 2-0 margin gave the kid who was pitching a good going-over. Coupling their mass vocalizing with horn blowing and other distracting antics, they upset the boy sufficiently to put him on a streak of wildness.

Instead of a no-hitter, he allowed enough walks in the closing moments of the game to give the other team a 2-2 tie for the night's nip and tuck battling.

Some of our best friends won't like our saying so, but it seems to us that a lot more than just winning or losing a ball game was involved in a spectacle such as this.

No one can blame a parent or a friend if he roots for his favorite team. However, there's a sickening taste to this business of getting so eager for victory that you'll gang up on a kid pitching in a Sunday school league, and give him the same rough treatment that professional ball players are subjected to.

It isn't the hardest thing in the world for a bunch of adults to unnerve a kid who is very much in

the spotlight. Professionals who learned to steel themselves against boos and cat calls often blow sky high, so this boy didn't have much chance when a formidable group of grown-ups gave him the works.

Maybe we are a bit confused about the aims and intentions of the Sunday school league. All along we were under the impression that it was organized to provide wholesome recreation for the town's small fry. We thought, and still do, that teaching good sportsmanship, was even more important than scoring the most runs.

Everybody likes to win. That's one of our childhood cravings that we never outgrow. Yet, learning to lose gracefully, when you've done your best, is the true mark of greatness in sports and everything else.

Those kids in the Sunday school league want to be champions. A few of them will get the thrill of being on a championship team. All of the others will have to settle for the next best thing. Like the rest of us, they'll have to settle for the next best thing lots of times from here on out, in baseball and in everything else.

If you give the game all you've got, then you've played like a champion, whether you finish on top or end up on the bottom. Part of playing like a champion is doing the fair thing—the sporting thing.

Generally speaking, the kids playing in the Sunday school league are displaying a sportsmanship far beyond their years. They are a credit to themselves, to the church they represent, and to baseball.

New Bern needs such a league, and owes a debt of gratitude to those who brought it into being. The league needs fans, too, who will root for their team. No one can blame a fan who pulls for his favorite team, as long as he stays within the bounds of fairness, good taste and sportsmanship.



PROOF ABUNDANT—When Emmett Brinson of 1600 High Street tells his favorite fish tale, he'll have this Mirror photo to back him up. Monday at Kennel's Beach his party of eight gilled so many flounders that they ran out of tubs within a two-hour period. When dressed out, the catch weighed over 200 pounds. Seen here with a portion of the poundage are a tired but happy group. Left to right are Mrs. Brinson, Emmett, Marian Brinson, Mrs. Frank Williams, Shirley Brinson and Karen Midyette. Pushed out of the picture by the flounders were two other members of the party, Emmett Brinson Jr. and Mickey Register.—Photo by Billy Benners.

However, what the Sunday school league doesn't need is the sorry spectacle of big folks browbeating little folks, for the sake of victory. The Sunday school league belongs to the kids. Let them have it and enjoy it. Be proud of them, win or lose, and never let it be said that you, as a grown-up, behaved unbecomingly at one of their ball games.

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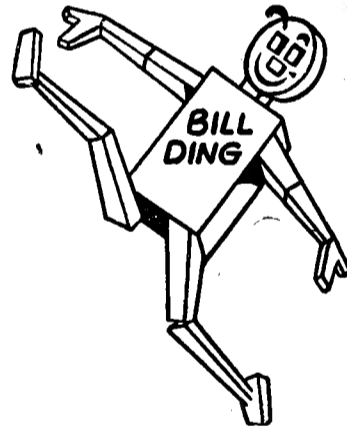
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