

The Gift of Perspective

Responsible Coaches teach players to Honor the Game by respecting opponents. Sometimes when it happens, as in Ellensburg, Washington on April 26, it reminds us of the transcendent power of sports.

Western Oregon University senior Sara Tucholsky's first-ever home run trot was interrupted by a serious knee injury preventing her from circling the bases. If a teammate were to help her, the home run would turn into an out.

Mallory Holtman, Central Washington University's star player, with bad knees of her own, saw Tucholsky in pain on the ground near first base, and acted. She and teammate Liz Wallace lifted Tucholsky and supported her weight as they 5-legged it slowly around the bases, for what would be half the margin of difference between two teams fighting for the Great Northwest Athletic Conference championship.

I've gotten more e-mail and letters about Holton and Wallace carrying their wounded opponent around the bases than on anything else in 10 years since I started Positive Coaching Alliance. Clearly it has touched a chord, but why exactly?

I think it is that Holton and Wallace have given us the gift of perspective.

The "Big Picture" in youth sports is how it enhances the lives of athletes (and their coaches and families) apart from scoreboard results. But too often the "Little Picture" (Who won? Did the officials err? Did my kid play enough?) obscures the essential beauty and community-building potential of sports.

When we all step back a bit and get a glimpse of the Big Picture, sports can be a breathtaking experience. Mallory Holton and Liz Wallace have given us all this gift of perspective and I am grateful to them.

—Adapted from Jim Thompson's weekly blog at ResponsibleSports.com