



Facing Top Competition Helps Us Get Better

By Bill Gosse

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When confronted with one of life's many ordeals, sometimes it's best to simply shake your head.

Another tale of questionable sportsmanship has been brought to my attention, and that's exactly what I feel like doing.

Was another father caught brandishing a weapon at a game? Was another mother ejected from a contest for berating officials?

No. This time a young boy was banned from pitching in his youth baseball league because he was too good.

Can you imagine Michael Phelps being told he can't swim at the 2012 Olympics because he is too good? How about informing a student he or she are no longer welcome at your school because he or she is too smart?

I thought that's what our country was all about – becoming all that we can be. Maybe that's only in the U.S. Army.

This brouhaha involved a young boy from Connecticut named Jericho Scott. It came to a head when he toed the rubber at a recent game and the opposing team forfeited, packed up and went home. Even though his coach stood up for him, the young boy understandably was hurt. He felt it was his fault nobody could play.

This is a young boy who loves pitching. He is good at what he does. He does not throw wildly, nor is he a disruptive force. He's simply skilled and is getting punished for it.

There were times I wish I could have told a few high school pitching opponents to go take a hike, but what would that have done for my development? At Marquette, I would have been laughed off the basketball court if I had told Doc Rivers not to be so good.

Isn't that how you get better as a player – by facing the best? An old proverb discusses iron sharpening iron.

Athletic sharpness comes from facing good players. By facing quality talent, athletes can see where their abilities lie and then work to refine them. Practicing diligently to improve one's abilities should help everyone raise their level of play.

Perhaps this co-ed league wasn't the place for nine-year-old Jericho. Maybe it was too easy for him. Why didn't anybody notice his ability prior to the start of the season?

Was it necessary to traumatize the gifted and talented child? Protesting by walking off the diamond surely didn't come from the kids. I bet this issue could have been resolved in the off-season by mature adults.

Our country's schools keep slipping in rankings when compared to foreign lands. It's obvious other countries' athletic abilities have caught up to us in sports near and dear to our hearts.

Are we spending more time running from our challenges instead of embracing them?

I thought we were a country who thrived on stories of underdogs and phenoms.

We need to keep that catchy tune in our heads and "Be all that we can be."