



Whatever Happened to Helping an Opponent Up?

This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.

“I see it less and less these days...a good, hard-hitting tackle followed by the defensive player assisting the ball carrier to his feet. The norm is more of aggression and celebration – both have their place in football – but what ever happened to helping an opponent to his feet as a show of respect? Is it just me, or are coaches no longer teaching this small gesture of sportsmanship to our young athletes?”

PCA Response by David Jacobson, PCA Trainer & Senior Marketing Communications and Content Manager

Televised sports are ruled by financial concerns tied to winning, which means that players and teams strive for every competitive edge available. To many players, that means leaving their opponents sprawled on the floor or field, whether as a show of dominance or a conservation of physical energy that will be needed later in the game.

It can be argued that helping opponents up requires even greater strength than knocking them down. That show of strength also can contribute to a competitive edge. More importantly, helping opponents up shows strength of character. It demonstrates a player’s commitment to Honoring the Game and often a set of impressive personal values that carries over beyond the field.

Perhaps helping opponents up happens less often than in decades past. However, there are still plenty of examples in televised sports.

Occasionally – as when Mallory Holtman helped carry her fallen college softball opponent around the bases to complete a home run – an example of Honoring the Game even elevates an obscure contest into the national consciousness. Holtman, now coaching the Central Washington University softball team, won an ESPY Award for Best Sports Moment in 2008, essentially for helping her opponent up.

However rarely those “Mallory Moments” appear on TV, consider that there are fields and courts all over the country where players help each other up. And that many of those display the “We Honor the Game Here” banner available in PCA’s online store at <http://shopping.positivecoach.org>.

To read more questions and answers like this, or to submit your own question to the Ask PCA blog, visit:

www.positivecoach.org/our-tools/ask-pca

For more Resources, visit: www.PCDevZone.org

For more information on Positive Coaching Alliance, visit: www.PositiveCoach.org