Win or Lose

Educational Value

Fair play, being a good loser

Moral of the story

To know how to win or lose gracefully is important to actually enjoy what you're actually doing, and not to give so much importance to the result.

Story

Pete hated losing at anything. His parents, teachers, and many others, said he didn't know how to lose, but the truth of it was that he couldn't stand losing, not even at marbles. It was so great, and he felt so good, when he won, that he never wanted to give up that feeling; not for anything in the world. On top of that, losing made him feel precisely the opposite. It seemed to Pete that losing was the worst thing that could happen to anyone. If there was a game Pete wasn't brilliant at, he simply wouldn't play it. But if he was going to win he would take part, even if the game lasted only a minute. And the kind of things he was really good at, like table football, you could hardly stop him playing.

A new kid started at Pete's school, and his name was Albert. Albert was a cracking table football player, and it didn't take Pete and Albert long before they challenged each other to a game. Pete prepared for the match with great seriousness. He was concentrated and intense. Albert, on the other hand, seemed not to be taking the thing at all seriously. He walked about the whole time, smiling and cracking jokes about all sorts of things. But on the football table, Albert was a real phenomenon. He scored goals again and again, laughing and joking all the time. However, Albert was paying so little attention to the match that Pete managed to change the scoreboard while his opponent was looking elsewhere, and so Pete managed to win by cheating. Pete made a big thing of his win, but it seemed not to matter to Albert.

- "It's been fun. We should play again some other time", said Albert.

On that day, people at school talked about little else. Pete's great victory was on everyone's lips. But, that night, Pete didn't feel so happy. He had won, but even with that there was no trace of the joyful feeling he usually enjoyed so much. What's more, Albert hadn't felt bad about losing. He almost seemed to enjoy it. And, to top it all, the next day Pete saw Albert playing basketball. He was absolutely hopeless; he lost time after time. But that happy smile never left his face.

For several days Pete watched the new guy. He was great at some things, terrible at others - to an embarrassing degree - but he enjoyed everything equally. Pete began learning that to enjoy a game you didn't have to have a scoreboard; nor did you have to have winning and losing. What you had to do was enjoy the game for its own sake, trying to do well, and enjoying each aspect of it.

Finally, Pete found himself playing hide and seek, telling a joke while playing table football, and regretting that a particularly fun game he was playing was soon about to end. And without really knowing why, the older kids started commenting amongst themselves,

- "Good fun playing with Pete, that kid sure isn't a sore loser."

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