

BUILDING CHARACTER

We Should Expect More From Adults

BY MICHAEL JOSEPHSON

Rick's 11-year-old son Mark was in a youth baseball league. He was not highly skilled and was easily discouraged, but Rick urged him to stay with the program. "Just do your best," he said. "That's all anyone can ask and your best is good enough." So the boy persisted.

The league had a rule that everyone plays. Mark played but regularly struck out at the plate and made errors in the field. When Mark struck out his first time at bat, Rick struggled to look positive. Later, Mark hit a hard grounder to third. It was close, but Rick was sure Mark beat the throw to first. When the umpire, a volunteer parent, called Mark out, Rick went wild. "Hey Zebra!" he yelled. "Are you blind, stupid or is the other team paying you?"

The umpire looked over at Rick, who couldn't seem to

control his growing rage.

"You're an idiot," Rick added. "If you can't do the job, stay off the field!"

On the way home, Mark was unusually quiet. Finally, he said, "Dad, I thought you said, 'Doing your best is good enough.'"

"It is," Rick assured him. "You were safe that last time. You were robbed by a bad call."

"I wasn't talking about me," Mark replied. "I was talking about the umpire, Billy's dad. I know he was doing his best, but you got really mad at him."

"Yeah, son, but he's an adult and we should expect more out of adults."

Mark looked his dad right in the eye and said, "That's what I thought too. By the way, I was out."

Rick's good intentions just weren't enough. We expect more from adults—more fairness and respect, more sportsmanship and more self-restraint. If your kids play sports, be a model, not a problem. ■

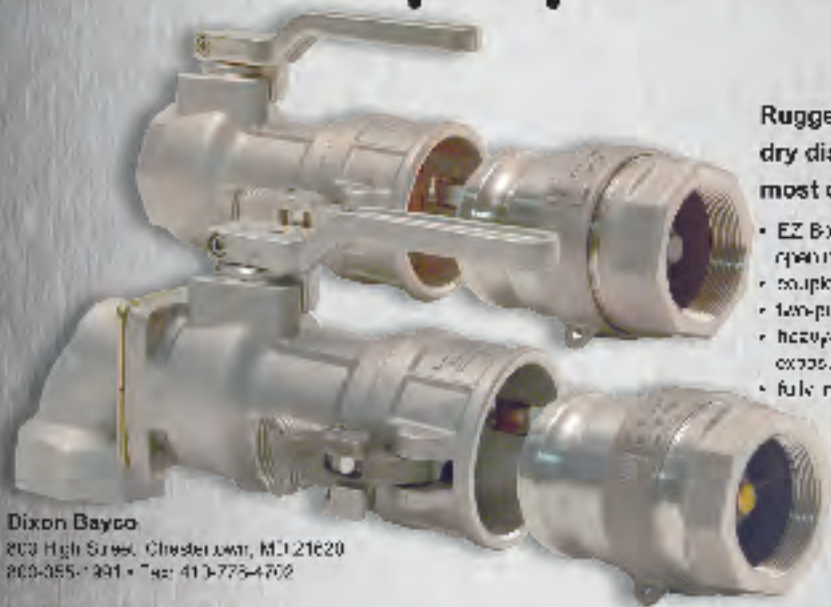
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