

The New Way to View Life Through The Old Ball Game

San Francisco, CA – More than two million kids from around the world will play on seven thousand baseball Little League teams this year. These children, ages 13 and younger, are taking part in a tradition that spans nearly 70 years. Parents across the world enroll their children in Little League not just to learn the sport, but to learn the ethics and team spirit associated with the great American pastime.

“What is on the field is an imitation of human life,” says Dan Liberthson, PhD and author of the new book “The Pitch is on the Way: Poems about Baseball and Life.” Liberthson says taking part in baseball games and watching the professionals on the field are fantastic ways to teach your children the basic morals and guidelines of life. “For 130 years we’ve been cheering for players to battle each other and challenge themselves on the ball field. No other sport is quite as American or inspirational.”

Parents want to give their children the tools for a successful and enjoyable life. Little League, Pony League, college, and professional baseball are great ways to build the foundational skills kids need to become adults. In praise of Liberthson’s book, Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig agrees: The great American pastime isn’t just a sport – it’s a chance to learn skills that guide Americans through all the pitfalls the world can throw at us.

Liberthson’s poems point out four life lessons both adults and children can get from baseball if they know where to look:

1) Failure, Injury, and Defeat Are as Much a Part of the Game as Success. As Liberthson points out in his poem “The Mound,” about a pitcher yanked from the game, we can all blow it, but we need to pick ourselves up and try again.

2) Don’t Relegate Yourself to the Dugout. A player might miss one opportunity and lose his focus for the rest of the game. He becomes obsessed with that one early mistake and can’t recover. It is the same with life: if you dwell on your past mis-step, you’ll never get a foothold on future success.

3) Don’t Let the Hecklers Get You Down. In many games, some fan is shouting above the crowd for the batter to miss, or the pitcher to throw badly, or deriding the umpire’s calls. Taking such spiteful criticism to heart will only ruin the player’s pleasure in the game and his chance of winning. “Everywhere in life you run into people rooting for you to fail,” says Liberthson. “Look at these professional athletes on the field and think about how the rival team is hoping they’ll fall flat on their faces. Still, these men often manage to succeed. It’s a good lesson for life: ignore unhelpful criticism if you are giving the game your best. You won’t have a chance to win if you don’t stop beating yourself and letting the hecklers beat you.”

4) You Can’t Win By Yourself. Baseball is a team sport. Sure, some teams have high-paid ‘hot shots,’ but without 9 players on each team and many support staff there is no game. The same is true of life: you can be the best at what you do, but if you’re not surrounded by good, supportive people whom you treat well, your chances of enjoying the experience are zero.

Liberthson continues his baseball metaphor to point out poignantly that “Life is hard, but at its core life is a game – a serious game. Maybe who wins or loses the game isn’t as important as how a player feels about the job he’s done as he walks off the field.”

About the Author

Dan Liberthson was born in Rochester, NY and graduated with a BA in history from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He earned a PhD in English (with a dissertation in contemporary poetry) from the State University of New York at Buffalo. Dan then taught college English composition and literature at Kent State and Akron Universities and for the U.S. Navy. Since 1978, he’s lived in the San Francisco Bay Area, working as a technical and medical writer. Liberthson has published poems in many venues, including the baseball magazines Elysian Fields Quarterly and Spitball: The Literary Baseball Magazine. Though he hasn’t played since Little League, Liberthson is an avid fan of the art of the game. His latest book, “The Pitch is on the Way: Poems about Baseball and Life” is his tribute to the sport that has given him hope, respite, warmth and laughter.

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