

I Know I Made a Mistake



“I Know I Made a Mistake” - Written By **Bill Boles, Jr**

I was coaching third during a heated tournament against a team that has become our rival over the past few years. We had a runner on second base and our girl hit a short fly ball into no-mans-land between the second baseman and the shortstop. Both girls drop-stepped and ran full speed converging on one another and sure enough, there was that spark-emitting collision that quieted the crowd as the second baseman caught the ball for the out.

As both girls were laid out in the dirt moaning, dirt mixing with tears I held up both my hands and told my girl on second base to stay on the base. The coach behind me stormed out of the dug-out yelling at the top of his lungs as though the world were ending, “GET THE BALL OUT, GET THE BALL OUT, THE PLAY ISN’T DEAD, WHAT’S WRONG WITH YOU??!!” I looked at that red-faced coach and then at his girls rolling in the dirt and I just could not believe that he would put one potential run over the health of his kids.

I watched how that every single member of that sisterhood wearing the same blue uniforms with their names on the back and matching bows were dejected seeing their sisters hurt and at the lack of priority established by their leader. After the dust settled, tears were wiped away, and the injured second baseman was subbed out, their errors multiplied, and we ended up winning by a large margin. It was interesting to reflect after that game that we didn’t beat his team, the opposing coach was the one who beat his team for us; all we had to do was put the ball in play.

I remember a time when I first decided to call myself a coach, I had organizational skills, I had determination, I had a degree in management, I had experience playing the sport at a pretty high level, and just because I was raising a daughter, I thought I knew what coaching girls was all about. Well, I was so wrong and when I think about it I am so embarrassed at the memory of the mistakes I made, but I am also honored at the opportunity I

had to learn at the feet of some of the greatest coaching mentors, most good, some bad, and a few who were ugly.

One of the greatest lessons I learned was that you don't have to yell across the 200 feet of softball field at a young lady who just made an error to let her know she made a mistake! Part of this lesson includes helping these young ladies to understand who it is they are playing for. They don't work through blood, sweat, tears, lace marks on their body, they do not compete; they do not play to please their coaches, their parents, or even their own teammates. They must understand they play the game to meet the standard they set for themselves. It is my responsibility as a coach to help them to set that standard, to make it achievable to avoid self-oppression and self-doubt, to make it measurable so they can celebrate when they achieve it, and to ride them out on my shoulders as they achieve and exceed their own standards. This is how a coach becomes a mentor.

My beloved left fielder who has been with me for 4 years had a can of corn hit to her in a pivotal game, and I saw the white of her eyes look at the runner right before the ball ticked off the edge of her glove. I knew she was looking at me afterward to see how I would respond. So I tapped my chest to let her know, I love you kid, I know you made a mistake, but I also know that you know that you made a mistake. On the next play, reach the bar you have set for yourself kiddo and don't worry about me.

Credit to Gary Leland, of Fastpitch.TV and link to [**http://Fastpitch.TV**](http://Fastpitch.TV)