

## Team Sports



By Anna Von Reitz

I hated team sports in school. I hated all of them with equal vigor. It wasn't any dislike of real teamwork or even the idiot-like simplicity of it (get ball, move ball) — that made me groan and snarl; it was the fact that there are so many better ways to learn teamwork and so many more profitable skills to be learned, that the enormous amounts of time, energy, and money spent on team sports seemed like insanity right from the start.

Of course, as a child, I didn't perceive the role of team sports as indoctrination and skill-building for the military. If I had, I would have hated it all the more— because even though it had a purpose (just as pigs have a purpose) it was neither an honestly presented purpose nor a positive one.

I am sure I would have liked it better if someone had had the guts to say, “Come on, children! We are going to help you learn how to work together to produce widgets!” Or even, “Come on, boys and girls, this is what you need know so you can kill large numbers of the enemy! Rah! Rah! Rah!”

That, at least, would have been honest.

Even back then, the Omnipresent THEY were bulking us up, putting steroids in our milk, tinkering with our adrenal glands, and as if farm kids in the Midwest needed more physical exercise, they were forcing us to do all sorts of specialized physical training— in retrospect, preparing us to aim and shoot at more than baskets.

When the call came to “serve our country” in Vietnam, we were a ready crop of gun fodder.

“Team Sports”, like Vietnam, is part of the reason that I became a rather embittered young woman, sad-eyed, skeptical, and tough. I have a portrait of myself from those years that stares back at me from the wall of my bedroom every night to remind me.

I stare at my own beaky-nosed visage from fifty years ago and think about “her” now and then, vainly trying to weave together all the lost threads.

My role in basketball was to move the ball down the court, and pass it to Adrian Blackdeer, so she could dump it.

Do this over and over and over.

Never take a shot or develop any skill at shooting baskets yourself, just dribble, dribble, dribble. I never asked her, but from the look on her face, Adrian found her part in this ritual just as senseless as I found mine.

Catch ball. Dump ball. Catch ball. Dump ball....

That's what they call "teamwork" but it's actually a blind fostered dependency on someone else's talents, so that together, you can accomplish something utterly mindless.

On Graduation Day Adrian heaved a big sigh and stared at me as dully as a steer in a feedlot and said, "So this is it."

I couldn't have said it better.

The long line of us graduates fidgeting and sweating and squirming in the ugly green robes and mortar boards had wound back on itself so that for a few minutes the "Bs" and the "Rs" were together, albeit, facing opposite directions.

So it goes. No sense of accomplishment or elation, just ---well, this is it. It's over.

No wonder that young people always think their elders are mentally incompetent.

How else can we explain what we put our kids through, the cost of it, and how little they get out of it?

Education in this country long ago ceased to be about the kids. Or even about education.

Adrian shook her head and looked up at the blue sky. She already knew this world is crazy.

"Where are you going from here?" I asked her.

"Dunno," she said and gave me one of her wicked little twinkling glances. "Maybe I'll get a basketball scholarship."

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