

Perservering the dark ages



The sad but undeniable fact about sport is that it's not necessarily the best team that wins when intimidation tactics are employed by one opponent against the other. It's just possible that junior hockey, like no other sport we know of, is the front-running example of this trend.

Nobody is more aware of what the threat of intimidation can do than coach Murray Lawrence of the Vernon Lakers. In this most recent case the aggressor happened to be the Revelstoke Rockets but it's really irrelevant to put the finger on any one team when it comes to shouldering the blame.

That blame should be rested squarely on the shoulders of the coaches and managers of teams that employ intimidation tactics to gain their results in a contest. And, if anyone else stands accused it should be the league governors of any sport who don't deal severely enough with coaches and teams who are guilty of this crime.

The crime they are guilty of is not just bloodying the faces of a few athletes, it's much more vast in scope than just this.

It is these people who have ruined sport. They have taken the joy out of the game for the fans. They have taken the desire to strive for excellence out of the players.

It is these people who have turned sport into a circus act rather than the athletic competition it was meant to be.

The sad part of it is that they are the ones who argue that this is "just part of the game". They are blinded by their own ridiculous attitudes toward the game.

There's no doubt in Murray Lawrence's mind that these people ruin the game for everyone else.

On the other end of the rope, coaches like Lawrence, who select their teams for ability at the sport rather than their ability with their fists, have to stand by helplessly while they are preyed upon.

Lawrence selected a team consisting mostly of small, finesse type players along with a number of very young players who fit the same bill.

Most of these are barely out of midget hockey. Half a dozen are still eligible for midget. For Lawrence to take these players, give them the confidence to play in a league where the majority of players are nearing their twenties, shows great strength of character.

But when the same kids get their faces smashed by goofs who can't and probably don't want to play on the same level, a coach like Lawrence can't help but feel he's led lambs to a slaughter. In one hour a group of thugs can destroy everything Lawrence has strived for since September, and leave him back on square one.

Even though it may mean losing a game, Lawrence and his team will still be the winners for sticking to their principles and playing the game the way it was meant to be played.

Someday, the right people will govern the sport. Only then will the way be paved for decent athletes to compete without living in fear that they'll have their teeth knocked out for trying their best.

When that day comes, they should pay homage to people like Murray Lawrence who perservered through these dark ages of sport.