

FITCH FILES: RACISMS DISTANT COUSIN ARROGANCE HAS NO PLACE IN SPORTS ESPECIALLY AT THE YOUTH LEVEL

November 17, 2008

It's very hard as a sports journalist to keep your composure on the sidelines during a game. From my advantage point, you see things... you hear things and in most cases, they are inaccurate... from no calls to allowed catches when the ball hit the turf first to bad spots.... On this particular weekend, I was totally overwhelmed with the lopsided calls in a Youth Football Super bowl competition.

I know what you are thinking... Steve, don't go there... Well, I've been quiet ALL season and now that the season is over... I must say this...

Isn't Youth Football supposed to be ALL about the kids? Youth Football, by definition, is an organization or team that teaches youth, kids ages 7 – 13, the fundamentals of American football from the standpoint of rules, activities, and training. Youth football also teaches kids how to compete and teamwork.

This season I've reported on adult activities including terrible discipline methods being used, parents who use the sport as an extended babysitting service, how you may not know the rules as well as the officials, as well as corporations who want monies from these organizations but don't come out to show support of their efforts on the field...

NOTE: Check out previous articles at www.amateursports365.com/FitchFiles.htm

So, at the end of the season, why not discuss questionable activities that have taken place... maybe it will improve the behavior of some.

Now, I'm not going to call it *straight up racism* but I am going to classify these activities as racism's distant cousin... **ARROGANCE!** By definition, arrogance is an adjective meaning.... (1) having or displaying a sense of overbearing self-worth or self-importance, or (2) marked by or arising from a feeling or assumption of one's superiority toward others.

I've come to this conclusion because of this... if a coach asks for an official to come over and explain a certain call an official shouldn't say "*I don't have to explain anything to you...*" or at least not initially... now if that coach has rubbed the official the wrong way prior to this, you may get this, but eventually he will answer your question especially at this level...

Secondly, in youth football, usually kids and coaches are giving warning as well as assistance before a flag is thrown. This practice enhances the game by way of teaching.

Example: *a wide receiver lines up and tells the official 'he's on the line...' then asks me I on... the official then says "yes," or makes an arm movement to inform the player to move up (or back)... heck, this happens even in high school... but not at this game... I heard several times, "you should know where you are..." **WOW!!!***

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Then there is the automatic first down judgment call even when the defensive team, which is predominantly black, ask for a measurement... usually if a team ask for a measurement, they are rewarded one unless it is a first down without question... this weekend, I witnessed a couple of questionable auto-first downs and when the coach ask the official he responded “*from your point of view back there,*” gesturing 20 yards back, “*it doesn’t look like it but where I am (ten yards from the position of the ball) it is...*” Now that’s not racism but it is its distant cousin - **arrogance!!!**

Then the icing on the cake for me was a team was penalized for not having their mouthpiece in... this penalty took away a first down and made it fourth and about 9 yards or so. This penalty (mouthpiece) is usually and has been a standard warning to the player and/or the coach not a flat out penalty... but not on this day – not on Super bowl Saturday...

I was able to find a rule via IHSA which states... "*Mouth Piece Not in Place*" - *Automatic 5 yard penalty if the mouthpiece is not in place when the count begins. The down shall be replayed. (Assess from line of scrimmage) Mouth piece must be attached to helmet unless authorized by the board for medical reasons. Playing without a mouthpiece endangers the athlete... ..this penalty is assessed after a discussion with coach of team affected as well as player as a common courtesy. After which, a 5 yard penalty is assessed to the violating team.*

See one thing I’ve learn, growing up in sports, is people of all backgrounds, races, religions, creeds, etc... can excel in sports not only due to their athletic ability but because EVERYONE plays by the same rules. See these so-called rules are bent in corporate America in a way that most non-whites can not compete on a fair, level playing field. But I digress.

In closing, when racisms’ distant cousin shows up, **cousin arrogance**, who does it truly help? In this case, not the kids... In fairness, the other team did out-perform the predominantly black team, but these questionable calls put the game in a goofy position. Furthermore, I’m certain the team did not want to win based on the actions of a couple of officials.

Now again, I’m NOT saying it was a racist situation... so don’t go calling Jesse or Al or even Mike Baisden... I’m just saying racisms' distant cousin showed up this weekend, **cousin arrogance** - UNINVITED!!!