

Tales

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called her out.
I thought I was going to have a fight on my hand as her coaches went nuts. One came running out to tell me she had been pushed off the bag. It was not an ideal time for a demonstration in physics, but that's not a call I will ever doubt.
- **Know your rules.** As with many people who show up to games not necessarily to cheer on their kids but to yell at the umpire, I once encountered a woman who didn't actually know the rules.

It was another rec game, and a base runner ran into the shortstop, who was making a play on the ball. I'd actually just reviewed this rule, and I called the runner out for interfering with the play.
The lady in the stands began yelling that the runner had the right and the shortstop had to move. Suffice it to say, my rabbit ears were working all too well that day. My self control, not so much. I yelled back that she should learn the rules before she came out and tried to make someone else look bad.
- **If these guys come back.** My final story comes from another rec game, this time baseball. Again, we don't have replay in rec so there are some snap judgements.

My dad was working behind the plate and had to make a couple calls there. They were bang-bang plays, the kind guaranteed to draw ire from either side once a call is made. His calls just happened to be against the same team.
Meanwhile, I had a close play at second. The base stealer beat the throw well enough but came up short on the slide. It was a fairly easy call from my vantage point, but not the dugout.
Now we've made three "bad" calls against this one team. By golly, we must have something against them. Or something in favor of the other team. Nevermind we barely knew any of the coaches or players.
Late in the game, there was a foul ball. The ball bounced with a ton of spin in fair territory. The pitcher went to grab it, and naturally, the ball spun

away into foul territory. There was virtually no way the kid missed touching the ball, so my dad and I both ruled it a fair ball.
That was the final straw. The game eventually ended, maybe because of that call, and I overheard the coaches say if we were out there for their next game, they would forfeit the game. Fine by us. We get paid for showing up.
The verbal abuse continued in the concourse as a parent who would never, ever in her wildest dreams think of squatting behind home plate for that pay in that heat with that much verbal abuse told me how bad we were at umpiring.
Again, I'm not overly proud of my self control, but I basically let her know what I thought. Parents like that deserve the umpires who call over-the-head strikes. No reasonable person will sit out there and take that from complete strangers who lack the courage to make the calls themselves.
And that was the point of my feature. So many times as a sports writer, I've seen a team simply get beat. But that's never a good-enough excuse for the parents. There must be some kind of "homecooking" or otherwise vast conspiracy why their kids couldn't win the game that day. C'mon, man.
It's not that I'm perfect. While coaching rec soccer, I exploded after an official refused to call high kicks and one of my players was nearly injured. I yell when certain rules that affect games and how they are taught and coached are blatantly missed. Perhaps if I coached higher-level sports, I'd yell even more. Perhaps not.
But the next time you're at a game, show a little respect to the guys and gals out there making calls. Most have the best of intentions when they begin officiating. Most get the calls right most of the time. If you don't like their work, yelling about it won't resolve the issue. Take the initiative to become an official yourself. Somehow, I get the feeling that if everyone umpired a game or two, there would be a lot less yelling from the stands.



Returning champ

Last season, Otis-Bison's Taylor Regan, seen here competing in St. John, won a state championship in the long jump. Her best mark of the season - 16-10.75 - led the area by nearly three inches, and her state championship mark of 16-9 won 1A by nearly five inches. This spring, Regan will also be vying for a championship in the triple jump, in which she finished third in 1A at the state meet.

(photo by Mike Courson)

Opener

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Allison Panning led the offense with two hits. Macy Munson, Katelyn Robinson, Kaitlyn Pohlman, and Oelke provided the other hits. Oelke and Beck each came around to score three times. Beck, Oelke, Kennedy Harrington, and Lauren Petz each walked twice.
"We had some really good hits," Duvall said. "They were sharp hits. We had a double, a triple, and a home run.

Those were all really well hit balls. That's what we need to have so I was pleased to see that."
With rain in the forecast, the Lady Eagles will continue to practice indoors over the weekend. Ellinwood is scheduled to play at home against Spearville on Tuesday, and on the road at Ellis next Friday. All of that is dependent on the spring weather cooperating.

Counts

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large counts and the risk of ulnar collateral ligament damage, leading to surgery.
The American Journal of Orthopedics reported in 2015 that 56.8 percent of UCL replacement ("Tommy John") surgeries between 2007-2011 were on 15- to 19-year-olds. A University of Waterloo study, published in 2015, however, found "no correlation" between "workload metrics" (pitching) limits and disabled pitchers under the age of 25 needing surgery.
Because of the myth that baseball pitchers can throw better after "doing a Tommy John," there's also a contingent of baseball-minded parents taking their uninjured young pitchers in for the procedure, which in my opinion would put a skew on things.
Tommy John – who is known more for the surgery that bears his name than the 288 major-league wins he posted – doesn't hold with pitch counts or restricted training as a guard against injury.
"If you train at 40 pitches, how can you throw 110, 115 or 120 and not hurt your arm?" John said in 2013. If you train at 80, 90 and 100, then you can throw that many. Tell that to the trainers, the pitching coordinators, pitching coaches, farm-club directors – any of them – and you will get 'Oh, my gosh, no!' as an answer.
"I liken it to running a marathon," John explained. "If I want to run a marathon, I have to get my mileage up. In baseball, we're trying to run a mini-

marathon with training on 50-yard sprints. Well, yeah, pitchers are going to get tired and maybe hurt because their arms aren't ready.
"The only way to keep pitching is to throw."
Is that all? -- Pitch counts by themselves don't consider the biomechanics of pitching. Good pitchers generally are good because they are coached by good coaches, with a good understanding of the mechanics of pitching.
A good high school pitcher can get by with four pitches: a fastball, a slider, a curveball and a changeup. Each pitch requires a different delivery metric, and each pitch is used for a different result.
A good pitcher bent on being better under the tutelage of a knowledgeable pitching coach can count on learning the following for use on the mound: a fastball, with energy stored and released from the shoulder, teaches location; a curveball and a slider, rotation and control; anticipation and batter IQ is learned from the change.
What worries me that with the pitch-count rule, comes the added pressure placed on pitchers from the first inning. Never mind that they already have a 3-to-1 advantage of getting to a batter; on the mound, they will be trying to squeeze out another 10 mph on their heater; a little more slip to their slider; or "just a couple inches more" on their breaker, when the game gets tight.
That's when most injuries happen; when they're least expected. Pitching smart is good; pitching wise is better. Pitching

coaches are good; pitching schools are better.
I don't think that a pitch count rule, by itself, has the stuff to beat it all.



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