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# this is a sport?



A QUESTION HAD BEEN POSED TO ME EARLIER IN THE MONTH AND I SPENT A GREAT DEAL OF TIME PONDERING THE ANSWER. What is a sport and what is the difference between a sport and good ol' competition?

Hmmm. Is baking a pie for the county fair a sport? It's a competition, so some people might approach it with a sporting spirit. But little old lady pie bakers don't have to wear body protection or kneepads, so I doubt it's a sport.

For some reason I was thinking about sporting pies when an unexpected sentence erupted from my mouth in the midst of a middle school basketball game.

"What an odd sport," I commented, watching my daughter's team move down court to score. "In fact, the very existence of sports is bizarre."

The War Department held a finger to her lips. "Shhh. Just watch the game and don't talk."

"It would be more interesting if they could hang on the basketball rim," I suggested.

"What's odd about it?" a nearby spectator asked me.

The War Department shot the guy a withering look. "Please don't encourage him."

I charged into the abyss. "Don't you think sporting events are strange? People chase spherical objects around a court or field to keep it away from other people while at the same time they try and throw the objects into what once was originally a peach basket, or across a line or into a net.

The War Department chimed in, "Be quiet."

"Okay Writer Boy, so what's the difference between a sport and competition?" another spectator asked.

"None," I answered. "Competition has become the definition of sports. Without competition, you can't have a sport."

"Aha!" the War Department shouted. "You like to hunt and I've always questioned whether that's a sport!"

"I never said hunting or fishing was a sport in the competitive sense. Unless it's some kind of tournament, then it's a competition, and that has no place in fishing or hunting, in my opinion."

"That isn't what you said earlier."

"The only time hunting is competition is when someone hunts

only for numbers of animals or points on a rack. As far as I'm concerned, they step out of the true meaning of the activity when they do that," I opined. "What competitive sport doesn't involve teams or individuals going head to head?"

The spectators pondered the point while the referee blew his whistle and said unintelligible things. The kids stared blankly at him and then resumed the game.

"Define sport!" a lady ordered.

"A "sport" is an active pastime, or recreation, and a specific diversion, usually involving physical exercise and having a set form and body of rules as in a game. It also means to play or frolic. To compete means to strive or contend with another or others as for profit or a prize."

"How did you know that?" the War Department asked, frowning.

"Been thinking. Here's something else. To me it seems like some sports are defined by a phonebook-size set of hard and fast rules, while others seem to have rules that make no particular sense, as if the judges suffer from some kind of mental problem that causes them to act erratically.

"Take ice skating for example. Two ice skaters make relatively the same moves, with the same polish, but one girl falls. You'd think she's going to come in second, but wait, she wins! How does that happen?"

"He doesn't even watch ice skating," the War Department clarified for the spectators.

"Not the point. When it comes to judging, things get muddy. I just don't understand it, but then again, I didn't understand the judging back when I was rodeoing. I think I should have won more. Maybe the whole thing is the difference between judges and referees ... hmmm. You wanna hear something else I've been thinking."

"No. But I do think you should compete with the neighbors about taking down the Christmas lights."

"Hmmm. It would be sporting of me to give them a head start," I replied. "This whole thing makes my head hurt. Let's just watch the ball game."

"How sporting of you."

"Entirely different subject," I answered and ultimately lost the encounter.

*Reavis Wortham is a freelance writer and humorist living in Frisco.*

