

Good Game by Ron White

I was eight years old. Looking back I remember walking across the baseball diamond of a Little League field and forming a line to pass the team that we had just played. The drill was to shake their hands and say, “Good game!”

I learned something at the age of eight. It is a lot easier to do that when you win!

When you lose, you have a tendency to slap the hand—instead of shake it—and look at the ground instead of the eyes. This is not only true at eight, but it is true for adults as well. A few years ago, I played 16 games in a softball league. You know you are on a bad softball team when motivational speaker Ron White is the standout superstar of the team! We lost 15 games in a ROW! It was humiliating. During the age-old “Good game” handshake after each loss, I made a point to look each player in the eye and shake, not slap, the hand. I did this because I knew that when I was eight years old I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t look my opponents in the eye and congratulate them on a good game. Somehow I took the loss as a hit on my self-worth and felt my self-confidence had been slapped; therefore I did what most eight-year-olds do and I slapped the opponent’s hand, not giving the satisfaction of a shake. I was wrong at the age of eight. I’m happy today as an adult that I have learned this lesson, and the lesson is: There is something to be said for losing well.

In 1960, Richard Nixon could have contested the close presidential election. He didn’t. He lost well and was elected a decade later to the same office. A few years ago, John Thune lost a razor thin election in South Dakota. He could have contested the election. He didn’t. He lost well and eventually won a Senate seat.

In 2000, John Ashcroft lost a Senate race to a woman who was standing in for her husband who passed away months before. He could have contested. He didn’t and became attorney-general.

Whether it is a baseball game, office promotion or political race, you can tell a lot about a person by how they handle defeat. The individual who handles defeat as a minor setback is not allowing the event to define him. On the other hand, someone who cannot handle defeat is allowing the event to define his self-worth. Events can only define your self-worth if you allow them to. You cease allowing events to define your self-worth when you handle defeat as a learning experience and remount the horse that has thrown you for another ride.

In money, your career or love, when you lose—as hard as it may be—look them in the eye, refuse to allow the events to shape your self-worth and shake their hand literally or metaphorically as you say, “Good game.” You just might find yourself winning the next game.