

I am sure that many of you enjoy sport. It is good to watch it on TV, to watch it in real life and it is even better to take part in it. But most of us know that point at which a game has stopped being a sport and become so desperate, so serious, that we ask ourselves what will some people do to win - and we feel a little frightened.

People in sport should work together for the good of the sport and its enjoyment for lots of people. But, when people become desperate to win, they can sometimes cheat in all sorts of ways, like taking drugs, attacking their opponents, on or off the field, and those who gamble on sport try to fix the matches - match-fixing. Fans are sometimes involved in throwing bottles and more serious weapons at the players and referees. People who really love sport, can feel sick at some of the things that go on and feel really depressed by it. Sport is spoilt by people who do not think about the good of sport or about others, they can only think of 'How can I win?' or 'How can I make as much money as possible?' They are thinking of me/me/me - and not the good of sport and all those in it.

I am not sure that I like this fashion of chanting and shouting at matches and the players jumping up and down. I hear you doing this sometimes in your form matches. Be careful! Don't go too far! It seems to encourage one side to say, "Ha! Ha! I am winning and you are losing!" But, if you have a match with two sides, one side has to lose - that is the point of a match! The important thing is, isn't it, that everyone should have a good time and do their best? But there are those who say, "No, the point is not to have a good time and do your best - the point is that, whoever wins is the greatest and whoever loses is rubbish!" But that is asking for trouble. When some football matches are played in the UK, thousands of pounds have to be spent on extra police and security to check that the fans of the visiting side who have to go from the stadium to their buses do not go along the road breaking shop windows if they have lost! You cannot make some people feel rubbish without risking violence from them.

But you and I can be very thankful for the best people in sport. They always encourage people to work together, whether they are winning or losing. They always have time for young players. Good fans always clap both sides whenever they play well. The right attitude is, "May the best side win - but, whether you win, or lose, may you both enjoy yourselves and end the match in a friendly way!"

God bless you.



SCHOOLS AND COACHING CENTRES – IT'S WAR!

Assembly 72 - May 19th 2003

Yesterday, I asked you to think about that point in a competition when it is going too far. A little competition is like spice in a dish. Too much and the balance of flavours is lost. But there are some organisations in Bangladesh that are so competitive that they are almost impossible to work with. All you can do is warn people about them. Most of them are not interested in cooperation. They want to put you out of business – or be a parasite, feeding off you, constantly draining your strength!

Today I want to discuss the serious matter of the relationship between a school and private coaching centre or individual private coaches. This has been very strange for me to understand because there is almost no private coaching in the UK. The teachers are far too tired, having very heavy time-tables and doing their ordinary teaching well and the pupils are far too tired doing the large amount of work expected of them. Quite honestly, I think education would be far better in Bangladesh if the same were true here! But I can understand private coaching for pupils who are in large classes of 70 or 80 pupils like those I had in Haluaghat and

where teachers could spend very little time with individuals - but, surely, this should not be true of this school.

The existence of coaching centres is very difficult for schools because the more rude such centers, and their coaches, are about schools, the more money they earn! The more they say, "Oh, the standards at The British School are going down. You need more teaching than they are giving you," the more likely they are to get customers and make more money. I am told that some coaching centres offer teachers who are teaching in schools a lot of money to bring pupils from their schools to their coaching center - just as some doctors bribe nurses and even rickshaw-pullers, to bring people to their private clinics. It is very tempting. Moreover, because parents always want to do the best for their children, some of them can quite easily be made to think that they are not being good parents if they do not get private coaching for their children.

It should not be necessary for any of you to have private coaching except in very special circumstances. There are some of you who need extra help with certain core subjects and there are now catch-up coaching classes here. All the teachers here are paid to give you maximum help with your work in school time and can set and mark extra work for you if you need it and give you some extra time. But, IF you concentrate in school time, and IF you spend the right amount of time in the evening and at weekends doing your home-work, that is surely enough time for you to make good progress. Moreover, you need to have rest, relaxation and social time with your families and friends in your free time. You have a long school day here and I am not pleased at the thought that some of you are doing extra coaching on top of a school day, when you are tired.

Of course, coaching for extra activities that the school cannot provide, is fine. I like to think of some of you doing extra music and art, dancing and singing, or extra sport or swimming or Guides and Scouts and other creative subjects that can be a

refreshment to you after your school day. But I do not understand why your parents pay for extra school work. In particular, if any of you have coaches who come in, in the evening, 'to help you to do your homework', then the whole point of the homework we set you can be lost if the coach just tells you what to write and does the work for you! Homework is to test that you can do the work you have done in class, on your own. If your private coach does it for you, then what are you going to do in the class test, or the examination? You cannot take your private coach into an examination with you! You have to learn to think for yourself and work on your own. If you do not understand something in class, do not say to yourself, "Oh, I will ask my private coach at home," because your private coach cannot possibly understand what your teacher has just taught you, better than your teacher! If you do not understand anything in class, put up your hand and ask! If you cannot do your homework, it is essential that your parents write in your diary, or in a separate letter, "Dear Teacher, My child did not understand your last lesson. Please can you explain it again." No teacher should be angry to receive that note. Disappointed maybe, but not angry - unless you were not paying attention in class of course. If you pretend you have understood something when you haven't, then of course, your teacher will go on to a new topic, and then, when you have your exam, you will get a low mark.

Having private coaching, I am sure, encourages some of you to waste time in your school-time here because you think, "I can always do this work later with my private coach." Thus your time is school is wasted, the time of your teachers here is wasted, your fees are wasted and you waste the time of the others in class who have not got private coaches and want to make progress!

Some of you older students may be tempted to leave school and try to do your O levels through a coaching centre. You may get a nasty shock when you try and enter a college or university because the best ones demand your last 5 years or so of school reports because they know that the education that *many* coaching

centres offer is not as good as *many* schools. For some universities overseas, if you have only been to a coaching centre, you have to spend a year doing an extra foundation course because they know that most coaches only cram you through the exam and do not teach you the learning skills you will need for university.

I am sorry that there seems to be no way that schools and coaching centres can work together. Our interests are quite different. In school, we are trying to give you an all-round day-time education and work, along with your parents, to care about your total development as a person. Most coaching centers are run on the belief that education is only about passing the next exam – and if you pay them enough, you think that you will pass. Please think very hard before you and your parents think you need extra coaching. If you want to do extra homework in a subject and more revision, then talk to your teachers here and I am sure they will be able to suggest something. We want to help you all we can so that every day can be well-balanced for you between school and home, work and play, concentration and relaxation. We believe that this is ‘education for life’. God bless you.



“LOWER YOUR GUNS – AND SMILE!”

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Let us continue to think of teamwork. Teamwork is sometimes very difficult. Some people do not want to be part of a team – they do not want to work with others. Sometimes they are suspicious of others. It can be very hard to develop trust between members of a team, in sport, in education, in a business – and there are very sad times when you find that someone you thought you could trust, is untrustworthy.

Like many of you I have been following the events in the Iraq War with very mixed feelings. Was it a good idea for Saddam Hussein, a very wicked leader, to be defeated like that or would it have been better to leave him alone? I don’t know but I want to share just one story from the war that I think is very interesting. I heard it just once and I do not know all the details. The story is that some American soldiers of the 101st airborne division under their Colonel Christopher Hughes, were entering the town of Najaf after the fall of Saddam Hussein. A crowd of Shia Muslims, angered by the presence of troops near a mosque started to advance towards the soldiers looking threatening. The soldiers did not know what to do. Their Colonel gave them a very strange order, “Lower your guns and smile!” Do you understand? Their guns were raised. The situation was very dangerous. Many people could have got killed. But the soldiers were told not to fire but to lower their guns and to smile.

It worked. Everyone relaxed. By lowering their guns and smiling, the soldiers were saying, “We are not fighting you – only your corrupt and wicked government. This war is not about Christians versus Muslims, or Americans and British against Iraqis. We all want the same thing – for Iraq to be a better country, a more free country. Let us not fight one another. Let us work together.” The crowd were so surprised by soldiers who behaved in such a friendly way to them that they accompanied them back to their base, congratulating them on having brought down Saddam Hussein and his Ba’athist regime whom they hated also. I feel very glad that American soldiers behaved in that way. I wonder how many other armies in the world would have done that. Can you imagine the Pakistani army doing that in the Liberation War? “Lower your guns and smile!” ?

It is very easy for us to see other people as our enemies or our competitors but, surely, we are all together in this world, trying to be better people in a better world. It is good to remind people that life is not ONLY about competition. Even in competition, we