

About the Fair Play- Internazionale XIX Fair Play Award

Enter the pitch and greet, one by one, all the members of the other team. And make eye contact while you shook hands. Greet the referees and the opposing coach.

Be inside of the stadium; be aware that many children, youth and adults are watching you, here and through their television screens, all over the world. Going out there knowing that it is a game and you have to enjoy because it is a party where 22 players are respected and respect each other and the rules.

There is one official program for the FIFA Fair Play and we all know that this code of conduct is essential to play football when we are on the field. But it is more than just a written rule; since you start playing in your firsts training clubs, coaches and indeed, all team members always dedicate some words about the meaning of fair play.

Sportsmanship is important in football and it is necessary to apply it in all areas of sport, particularly in children's activities. Children need to grow up with strong values and as football is a team sport, it helps them to understand the importance of discipline, respect, team spirit and sportsmanship, both in sport and in life.

This fairness is nothing but respect for the other; respect for his personality on the field and off-site. So, when you respect your teammates and the coach and the staff, you will do the same in your life: you will have respect for your friends, your neighbors and everyone with whom you come across. And that is what children and young people should learn when they start in any sport.

It seems that in football everything is bigger, so the offenses on and off the field are too. It is a sport with many fans and supporters; with people suffering as the same player does, but unlike the latter, he is impotent in his seat or at home. And that is when they often start the verbal abuse. And this is also part of the fair play; because not only the players are required to be educated while playing but also fans should do the same from his position as spectators. Only then we will get the optimal environment for a nice and clean game.

From my experience I think that the basic thing is to play on the basis of respect, even with your worst and most dangerous rival. Because what you have to do is to talk through the score, not with kicks and insults. So, yes, we play to win, but if we lose, we must accept it with dignity and we need to congratulate the opponent, because someday the situation could be the opposite one. And it's always better to lose with dignity, than to win with bad manners.

Also, you have to accept that in a sport team which plays against another one, the opponent will always have the same rights -and obligations- than your team. And it is so important to be part of a respected group that also respects those in front of them. That should be the first rule on the field. Then the goals and the final score will say the rest.

Players have to be aware that football, more than any other sport, is worldwide, and that is why we have the responsibility to show the world that the most important things are the values and the group cohesion. And that includes respect for the adversary, all the members of the team and also the respect for and from the supporters.

In a 90 minutes match there is also time for distractions and often the insults, racist attacks for reasons of origin or religion to the adversary appears. As far as I am concerned, that has nothing to do with the sport that has given me everything in life. In those moments you feel powerless, but fans need to realize that insults or any other personal attacks are useless and only help to give a negative image of the fans and the sport they also love.

But the very best of football is that it has an immense force that reaches all around the world, and that is what we need to take advantage from. Furthermore, we can use all football strengths to teach many things to children wherever they are. The values are universal and fair play is about promoting peace, equality and better health education and sport at all levels.

Finally, I would like to say that we can all do steps to ensure that sport, like our own life, could be a playground full of good manners and understanding.

Eric ABIDAL

Former footballer