

What is Spirit of the Game?

By Dan Macmaster

Ultimate has traditionally relied upon a Spirit of Sportsmanship, which places the responsibility for fair play on the player her/himself. Highly competitive play is encouraged, but never at the expense of the bond of mutual respect between players, adherence to the agreed-upon rules of the game, or the basic joy of play. Protection of these vital elements serves to eliminate adverse conduct from the Ultimate field. Such actions as taunting of opposing players, dangerous aggression, intentional fouling, or other 'win at all costs' behavior are contrary to the **Spirit of the Game** and must be avoided by all players.

These elements of the rules set Ultimate apart from all competitive team sports. For over 50 years, Ultimate has flourished, reaching a highly competitive level, without the use of referees. In Ultimate, the honour system works. Sure, human nature rears its ugly head in Ultimate - just as in any sport, just as in life. Yet one of the many beauties of Ultimate is how, even amid the most difficult of situations, utmost graciousness is allowed to meet that challenge head on. Through this balance, Ultimate players are free to demonstrate the most honourable and the most joyous sides of human nature in sport.

- ☺ It's calling your own foul.
- ☺ It's playing at the highest level you are capable of.
- ☺ It's realizing that it's just a game.
- ☺ It is how you feel when the losing captain comes up after the game to congratulate you, not on the win but on the foul you called on yourself.
- ☺ The Spirit of the Game is running after the disc like it's the thing you want the most in the entire world, laying out, and making the catch (It's such an awesome feeling). Then, when you think it can't be any better, as you stand up in the endzone, to see not only your team, but also your opponents cheering and congratulating you.
- ☺ Someone on my own team making an honest call that I landed out of bounds.
- ☺ An opponent helping me up off the ground.
- ☺ Respect for everyone who plays, even if they don't show it as much as they should.
- ☺ Congratulating impressive lay outs.
- ☺ Coming up with awesome cheers.
- ☺ Knowing that all age groups are teammates.
- ☺ Never assigning any blame.
- ☺ A warm handshake with a new friend after a hard fought game.
- ☺ Understanding that in a co-ed game, it takes all 7 players contributing to be successful.
- ☺ Helping someone make the correct call.
- ☺ Not yelling at someone to make the call you want.
- ☺ Returning the disc to a new player who makes a violation he has no idea he or she is making.
- ☺ Playing a hard-fought game, then telling tall tales with your opponent afterwards.
- ☺ It is watching what young players go through as they learn to respect each other and the Spirit with which Ultimate should be played.
- ☺ It is the quickest way to see the true inner character of every player.
- ☺ It is when you're down by 8 and bring it back to within two. It's these times, when you and the person you're matched up against are caked with dirt and drenched in sweat, when you've already left it all on the field but still find some way to run hard, that you find out about the real players.
- ☺ It's when you inspire your opponent and they inspire you not just to keep going, but to raise your level of play. And in the midst of the war, knowing only one of you can win, you play against your opponent the way you wish they'd play against you: with everything you've got left, respecting their efforts and their calls, because you know that no matter how bad they want to win, they're going to do it fairly. And when it's all over, when no matter what the outcome, you shake hands, look your opponent in the eye with a stare of mutual respect and say "nice D".