

A GOOD SPORT

It was recess, and Jodie and her friends were playing a game of baseball.

“You’re out, Jodie!” Theo yelled. “I touched your hair.”

“No! No! Hair doesn’t count!” Jodie cried angrily.

“Miss Tammy,” Theo asked the assistant teacher watching the children, “does it count if I touched Jodie’s hair? Is she out?”

“Why don’t you stop the game and agree on the rules you’re going to play by,” Miss Tammy suggested.

Together the children began discussing the options for how they were going to play.

“Hair is part of you!” Theo said. “I think it has to count, otherwise we can’t count clothes either.”

“But my hair is long, it’s easy to touch,” Jodie said. “I’m going to be caught all the time!”



"I have an idea, Jodie," her friend Melissa said. "If you put your hair up, then it wouldn't be as easy to touch. Then we could count hair."

"Okay," said Jodie. "I'll ask Miss Tammy to help me."

Once the rules had been agreed upon, the game started again. But Jodie wasn't feeling happy with the game. She was worried that she was still going to be out easily because she wasn't very fast and wouldn't make a home run. When the next batter hit the ball, Jodie ran as fast as she could to make it to home base, but no matter how fast she ran, she didn't make it to the base before Danny caught the ball and she was out.

"You're out, Jodie," Danny said.

"Danny! Why did you have to get me out?" Jodie cried out angrily. "Why couldn't you have tried to get someone else out instead? I don't want to play anymore!"



“But, Jodie, that’s not being fair!” Danny replied.

“Well, this game isn’t fun for me anymore, so I’m going to do something else.” And with that, Jodie strolled off in a huff and sat down on a bench in the corner of the playfield.

“What happened, Jodie?” Miss Tammy asked.

“I got out—again! Then when I said I didn’t want to play anymore, Danny said I didn’t play fairly. I just wanted to make one home run!”

“When you play games with others, Jodie, it’s important to have good sportsmanship,” Miss Tammy explained. “That means you’re easy to play with, you follow the rules, you play well with others, you’re a good winner, *and* a good loser.”

“But it’s not fun when I lose or don’t make the home run! It’s embarrassing!”



“I can understand that,” Miss Tammy said. “When I first started to play volleyball at school, I always seemed to miss the ball or hit it too far. I felt so bad that I wasn’t sure I wanted to play. It was embarrassing for me to make so many mistakes and I wanted to stop playing, but my coach kept encouraging me to keep trying. He told me not to worry about the mistakes, but to focus on practicing and getting better.

“In time, I started to play better, because I kept trying, but I was never one of the best players, and I had to learn to be all right with that. I could still have fun even if I didn’t win or I didn’t play as well as I would’ve liked.”

“Oh dear!” Jodie said. “I guess I was being a poor sport and not a very good team player.”



“Well, it’s not too late to try again and do better,” Miss Tammy said. “Why don’t you go talk with your friends and try again? Just remember that it’s only a game, and winning or losing is not what’s most important. Your focus should be on having fun, getting exercise, and enjoying your time with friends. When you have the right attitude and are a good sport, others enjoy playing with you, and you’re more likely to have fun as well.”

“Thank you, Miss Tammy. I’ll try to do better.”

Jodie went back to her team.

“I’m sorry I wasn’t being a very good team player, guys,” Jodie said. “I shouldn’t have gotten angry and stomped off the field. Would you mind if I return and try again?”



“Sure, Jodie!” Danny said. “Our team is pitching and in the field now. You can take second base.”

“Okay,” Jodie agreed and went off to her position.

As the game went on, Jodie found that if she didn't worry too much about the times she made slip-ups or things didn't go as she wanted them to, and instead focused on the enjoyment of the game, she really did start to have a good time. When the game ended, even though she'd had her share of dropped balls, falls, or misses, she had also done her part to help her team play. They didn't win the game, but from the smile on her face at the end, no one would've guessed.

“Thanks for a great game,” she called to her friends as she headed off the playfield. “I'm glad I got to play!”

