

EVERYBODY WON

Last night was the last game for my eight-year-old son's soccer team. It was the final quarter. The score was two to one, my son's team in the lead. Parents encircled the field, offering encouragement. With less than ten seconds remaining, the ball rolled in front of my son's teammate, one Mikey O'Donnell. With shouts of "Kick it!" echoing across the field,

Mikey reared back and gave it everything he had. All round me the crowd erupted. O'Donnell had scored!

Then there was silence. Mikey had scored all right, but in the wrong goal, ending the game in a tie. For a moment there was total quiet.

You see, Mikey has Down's syndrome and for him there is no such thing as a wrong goal. All goals were celebrated by a joyous hug from Mikey. He had even been known to hug the opposing players when they scored.

The silence was finally broken when Mikey, his face filled with joy, grabbed my son, hugged him and yelled, "I scored! I scored. Everybody won! Everybody won!"

For a moment I held my breath, not sure how my son would react. I need not have worried. I watched, through tears, as my son threw up his hand in the classic high-five salute and started chanting, "Way to go Mikey! Way to go Mikey!" Within moments both teams surrounded Mikey, joining in the chant and congratulating him on his goal. Later that night, when my daughter asked who had won, I smiled as I replied, "It was a tie. Everybody won."

A few years ago, at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash. At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run the race to the finish and win. All, that is, except one little boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a

couple of times, and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry.

They slowed down and looked back.

Then they all turned around and went back.....every one of them.

One girl with Down's Syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "This will make it better."

Then all nine linked arms and walked together to the finish line.

Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes.

People who were there are still telling the story.

Why? Because deep down we know this one thing: What matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What matters in this life is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course.