HOW ABOUT BOOING?

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At the 1933 meeting of the National Association of Basket Ball Coaches the members were asked to register a disapproval of the growing practice of spectators to boo. The response, at first, indicated that the coaches were wary about expressing an opinion, but a little urging resulted in a vote to condemn the practice.

Since then little has been said or done and the practice is still common in many sections. Evidently there are many coaches who either feel that booing is not the evil it has been painted, or that it is not their job to control it. Soon, however, we will be called upon for some decisive action, and it might be well to analyze our feelings before we act one way or another.

Under Rule 6, section 7, the National Rules Committee has covered the matter by the following answer to, "Who is responsible for the behavior of the spectators ?"

> "The home management or committee in charge of the game, insofar as they can reasonably be expected to control the spectators. The Referee or Umpire may call fouls on either team if its supporters act in such a way as to interfere with the proper conduct of the game. Discretion must be used in calling such fouls, however, lest a team be unjustly penalized."

Wherever crowds have been very large we all know that this ruling mostly has been ignored by game officials and athletic authorities. Formerly this was not true and many teams were fouled because of spectator misbehavior. Why the change? Some of the more common excuses given are:

1. With many non-students attending the games any regulation to prohibit booing, or to penalize a team for it, is either unfair or impossible to enforce.
2. Some insist that booing is not a serious menace to the game. They say it does not ordinarily bother the proper conduct of the contest nor hinder the players.
3. A few extremists take the attitude that a noisy, critical crowd adds color, keeps officials more alert, results in faster playing, and gives the spectators more thrills.

In sane moments most coaches, officials, and players admit that it is more satisfactory if a crowd eliminates the hoots, and confines its vocal action to legitimate cheering. However, the campaigns to educate the public to this ideal situation have been few and sporadic.

The temporary effect of such campaigns has been due largely to questionable actions of some members of our own profession. In other words, the missionary program failed because it did not start at home. Fair play should demand that coaches hang out clean linen of their own before criticism of others. A whole season's sportsmanship campaign fails in five minutes when some coach gives vent publicly to his displeasure.

Every section of the country has its coaches who are instrumental in starting the boos. They violate the code by coaching from the sidelines; sometimes adroitly, but often in more obvious ways. They heckle with the crowd. In tense moments, or when decisions are made against their players, they jump up and down, yell at the official, hold their noses, wave their arms, make faces, address remarks to opponents, or even run out on the floor. Sarcastic or critical statements to reporters after the loss of a game do not encourage good crowd behavior. With such leadership how can we expect the spectators to remember any harangue on fine sportsmanship?

Players, too, have been guilty of leadership in booing. When a competitor is fouled and then shows disgust, anger, or feigns innocence; or should he fake injury after a collision; or 'rub it in' to embarrass a member of the home team the crowd immediately stages the usual vocal demonstration.

Like all arguments this one has two sides. What does the average spectator have to say?

His first point is a good one. At baseball, football, hockey, or at any other sport which has some degree of personal contact the crowds feel free to root, cheer, or boo. Is basket ball, ask they, to be an exception?

Challange their sportsmanship in booing, and what is the reply? With reasonable satisfaction they point to the actions of certain coaches and players as to precedents for their own rowdy conduct.

Spectators deny the justice of fouling a team for crowd misbehavior, and defy authorities to exclude them from the hall. While such extreme measures have been advocated few athletic managers have shown any willingness to make any move to antagonize those who pay the freight.

Three possible courses, then are open to coaches.

1. We can adopt a policy of 'hands off' and hope that booing will become no worse.
2. We can admit that it has a place in the game. If we do it might be wise to pool our stunts and start some 'bigger and better' booing campaigns.
3. After some checking of our own actions we might inaugurate sportsmanship campaigns to reduce booing, and keep after the practice until it is under control.