

# Winning at all costs is no kind of victory at all

Baseball may lay claim to the title of our “national pastime,” but there can be little doubt that football wears the crown of kings in terms of national popularity if TV ratings serve as the barometer.

If you need any convincing of that, then just look at the Nielsen ratings for last season’s Super Bowl, which attracted 112.3 million viewers worldwide, compared to the 14.3 million average audience for each World Series game last fall.

Combined, the numbers offer incontrovertible evidence of our growing appetite for televised sports, whether of the pro or college variety.

The appeal is due in large part to our love of competition, where fandom has an opportunity to display allegiance to their favorite team on the field of battle.

Each game, of course, produces a winner and a loser, and serves as a measuring stick for the relative quality of both teams in terms of talent, grit, determination, and preparation.

Legendary Green Bay coach Vince Lombardi, who guided the Packers to back-to-back Super Bowl titles in the late 1960s, was of the mind that “winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing,” which may explain why certain athletes feel compelled to gain an unfair advantage by tipping the scales in their favor.

The list of those who have sullied their sport by cheating is long – and growing – and includes the likes of “Hall of Shame” members Lance Armstrong, Marion Jones, Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens, Rosie Ruiz, Mark McGwire, Alex Rodriguez, Rick Pitino, and Bill Belichick.

They evidently neglected to read another Lombardi quote which defined the limits that one can go when in search

of victory: “The objective is to win: fairly, squarely, decently, and by the rules.”

A willingness to play by the rules dovetails with the desire to be a good sport, celebrating victory with class while being equally gracious in defeat.

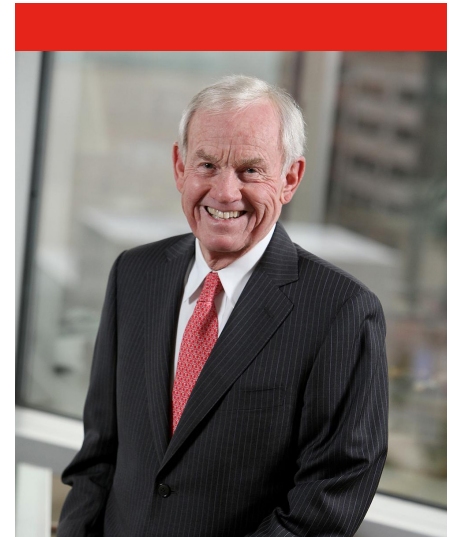
Sore losers, not surprisingly, have long been the bane of athletic competition, reviled for habitually blaming others for their loss or misfortune. Finger-pointing, it has been said, is the last refuge of a sore loser.

That practice now may become a political artform, thanks to a former president’s unwillingness to accept his 2020 election defeat even after losing repeated court challenges and being urged by some of his most loyal supporters to move on for the good of the country.

The refusal to concede defeat is now apparently part of some politicians’ playbook, as a number of state and federal candidates backed by the former president have declined to say whether they will accept the results of the upcoming elections if they are on the losing end. In effect, they are expressing their contempt for the election process as a whole, thereby placing our entire system of democratic government in peril.

For the most part, sportsmanship has been a fixture on the athletic scene for more than a century, just as civility has been ingrained in the legal profession since its inception. The question now is whether political candidates will have the integrity and the courage to follow suit.

The answer figures to come in the November 8 midterm elections, which may well serve as a referendum on the future of democracy. The stakes are



high and have prompted us to launch the Primerus Foundation as a non-partisan vehicle for attracting bright and dedicated candidates who can help bridge the political divide that threatens to fracture our country.

In recent years, the U.S. has experienced a slide away from democratic norms, fed by a political polarization caused by rising social distrust. The decline has been slow and steady and can be reversed only by an engaged electorate motivated to restore our system of governance to its former glory.

If we opt to stand idly by, we will be the unwitting authors of a concession speech that will read more like our political epitaph.

If instead we turn out in force on election day with a determination to uphold the rule of law and our belief in a time-tested system of governance, then we will have written an altogether different story, one framed within the finest ideals of representative democracy.

Best regards,  
**Jack Buchanan, President**