

## Using Games To Help Boys Become Men

Monte F. Shelley, 8 Oct. 2006

At Wood Badge, games were used to teach adult leadership lessons (e.g., communication, leadership styles, project planning, team building, problem solving). We also discussed the mission, aims, and methods of Scouting. This paper discusses how leaders might use games in dens, troops, teams, and crews to achieve the mission and the aims of Scouting (i.e., character development, citizenship training, mental and physical fitness).

Although games are not listed as a method of Scouting, *Footsteps of the Founder* contains several Baden-Powell quotes about games and aims of Scouting. "Our method of training is... to offer [fun] games and activities which... will seriously educate him *morally, mentally and physically.*" (p. 144) "Scouting is a school of *citizenship* through games." (p. 151) "Don't have individual competition... but always... have the Patrol as a *team.*" (p. 17) "Football, baseball, basketball,... swimming and Scout games are... the best form of *physical education*, because most of them bring in *moral education* as well." (p. 61)

Games have rules, a scoring method, and incentives to win (e.g., competition, recognition, and rewards). "*Scouting is a game with a purpose.*" Games provide opportunities and incentives for *ALL* scouts to play, work as a *team*, have fun, do their best, learn Scout skills, and improve their mental and physical fitness. Life lessons may be discussed after games. These are important in Scouting. However, the most important purpose of Scout games is: "*To prepare young people to make ethical choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law*" (BSA Mission). In games this is called good sportsmanship.

It is easy to make ethical choices if there is no opportunity or incentive to do otherwise. The movie *Chariots of Fire* showed two runners who wanted to win. Each had opportunities and incentives to make unethical choices. One runner had a good Scout *Oath and Law (SOL)* score. He did his duty to God and was trustworthy, friendly, and kind. The other runner had a low *SOL score* because winning was more important to him.

The world provides many opportunities and incentives to make unethical choices. For those who focus on winning, cheating is an acceptable strategy. They ignore their *SOL score* because winning is more important than how they play the game.

- College and pro athletes may take steroids, cheat, lie, yell at refs, use profanity, try to injure opponents, etc. The best pro athletes make over 10 times more than average pro athletes.
- In church basketball, one man swore at and pushed a ref for making a bad call. The stake presidency gave him the choice of not playing basketball or being released as bishop.
- "In a 2004 study... [of] 2,400 male high school athletes: 51% endorsed the coaching tactic of arguing with officials to influence calls, 58% said it was acceptable to inflict pain on an opponent as a method of intimidation and 30% approved of using a stolen playbook. Overall, 56%... agreed with the statement: 'In the real world, successful people do what they have to do to win, even if others consider it cheating.'"<sup>1</sup>
- A little league boy told the umpire he had not touched the runner who was called out. Several parents in the stands got mad at the boy for telling the truth instead of being quiet.
- A Cub Scout's father bought a fast Pinewood Derby on eBay.
- The TV show, *Survivor*, gives \$1 million to the best deceiver.

For some people, business and politics are the ultimate games with the biggest rewards (e.g., money, power, fame). The money and power score is more important than the *SOL score*. For some,

business is war and deception is used to destroy competitors. There are opportunities and incentives to use immoral or illegal methods (e.g., break contracts) to take advantage of others. Auto-mechanics may bill for unwanted and unneeded repairs. Lawyers, doctors, and government contractors may overbill for services. Doctors may prescribe unneeded or more expensive drugs. Stock advisors may recommend stocks that benefit them personally. Accountants may alter financial reports to keep stock prices up. Millions can be made by selling products that hurt people physically, mentally, or financially.<sup>2</sup>

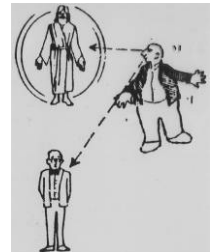
**SOL Game:** Every Scout game is a chance to practice the Scout *Oath and Law (SOL)* or good sportsmanship. To achieve the BSA mission, we help boys make, understand, and keep the Scout Oath. Likewise, to achieve the mission of the Church (i.e., proclaim Gospel, perfect Saints, redeem dead), priesthood leaders help others make, understand, and keep covenants.

Games are like quizzes that help us know what parts of the Scout Oath and Law we should emphasize after or during a game. In Scouting, every game can have an *SOL score*. This score may be different for each member of the team. Some may be willing to sacrifice their *SOL score* to win while others may not. Thus, the majority decision may hide the individual *SOL scores*.

The *SOL Game* continues after the other game is over. How do the winners and losers treat each other? Are both good sports? Are they both friendly and kind? How do Scouts treat their teammates? If someone was untrustworthy, did he apologize and make amends? Was he forgiven? (In life, forgiving a debt does not mean you would trust the person with a new loan. Trust is easy to lose but hard to regain.)

At least three other 'games' affect a Scout's *SOL Score*: the Pride Game, Blame Game, and Change Game.

**Pride Game:** Winners are tempted to play the *Pride Game*. Winning tends to puff people up in the pride of their hearts. They make fun of, look down on, and persecute the losers. They may also pat themselves on the back like the Pharisee who prayed, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." (Luke 18:11) One who is puffed up does not look up to God or seek to do His will.



The losers can also play the *Pride Game* because they know they are better than the winners. Next time, they will prove it! The motive isn't to improve but to prove they're number 1! As in King of the Mountain, the goal is to knock the winner off the mountain.

**Blame Game:** The losers and their fans may also begin to play the *Blame Game* with its three simple steps.

1. Find Fault (we lost)
2. Who is responsible? (ref, coach, teammate, self)
3. Punish!! (bad mouth, put down, pick on)

These three steps often occur at the same time! For example, if a ref makes a bad call during a game, we immediately hear "boos"!

Police and judges are paid to play the *Blame Game*. On TV we can watch a gymnast perform and listen to a critic find fault and show us in slow motion the faults (imperfections, defects, mistakes). When our likes and beliefs are the standard, it is easy to find fault. One man found fault with God for putting the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden and for not guarding it. Darwin found fault with God's creations because he would have done it differently. Pharisees found fault with Jesus for breaking the Law of Moses (e.g., healing on the Sabbath) as they understood it.

During a baseball game when I was 13, my team was ahead by 3 runs. The bases were loaded with two outs. I was playing second base. The batter hit a pop fly ball that I lost in the lights. When the ball landed about 10 feet behind me, I ran, picked it up, and quickly threw it toward the shortstop to get the runner out at second base. It was a bad throw and the ball sailed out to the left field fence. All four runs came in. We lost because of my error, and my teammates were mad! I went on many guilt trips because of that error and relived the whole experience many times. That was the only game we lost all season. My teammates often reminded me that I had cost the team a perfect season.

Five years later, I was playing second base during a softball game in the same ballpark. The bases were loaded with two outs. The batter hit a pop fly ball that I lost in the lights. When the ball landed 10 feet behind me, I ran, picked it up, and quickly threw it toward the shortstop. I stared in amazement as it sailed out to the left field fence. All four runs came in. Since then I have learned that each time I relived my error during those five years, I was practicing to do the same thing in a similar situation.

- Guilt trips reinforce bad habits and mistakes.

**Change Game:** Leaders can help Scouts play the *Change Game* when they lose. The *Change Game* has four steps.

1. What do I want?
2. Am I response-able? (If not, go back to step 1.)
3. Plan and do it!
4. Did it work? (If not, do something else.)

Many people know what they *do not want*, but are not sure what they *do want*. When a counselor asked an unhappy husband what he wanted, the man said, "I want my wife to quit nagging me." The counselor said, "Shoot her or gag her." The husband said that was not what he wanted. The counselor asked, "What *do* you want your wife to do instead of nagging?"

After throwing the ball to left field, I could have played the *Change Game*: (1) I want to make a good throw, (2) I am response-able, and (3) practice mentally and physically doing it right. However, I played the *Blame Game* and did *penance* ("pay for") for my error or sin by reliving, regretting, and remorseing. In the *Change Game*, I would have *repented* (changed) of my error or sin. In the *Blame Game*, guilt trips are a common means of self-punishment. In the *Change Game*, guilt is like a fire alarm that is turned off when firemen arrive and when the fire is out.

When Nephi's bow broke, Laman and Lemuel played the *Blame Game*. They blamed Nephi, and murmured against Nephi and Lehi. While they were complaining, Nephi played the *Change Game*: (1) he wanted food, (2) he was response-able, (3) he made a bow and asked Lehi where to go hunting, and (4) it worked.

*Blame Gamers* focus on the past which can't be changed. *Change Gamers* focus on what can be done now to fix the problem or prevent future problems. *Blame Gamers* complain about problems. *Change Gamers* solve them.

In the following situations, imagine playing both the *Blame Game* and the *Change Game*. Which would you normally play? Which would work best? Which would hurt relationships?

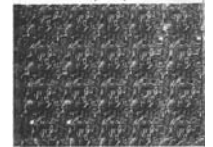
1. Your car has a flat tire.
2. 15 yard penalty against your football team.
3. You locked the keys in the car.
4. Your son calls to say he locked the keys in the car *again!*
5. You get negative feedback about something you did.
6. You lied or cheated to win a game.
7. Your unmarried daughter gets pregnant.
8. Your son is sent home from his mission, disfellowshipped.

- Learn from the past. Live in the present. Prepare for the future.

**Coaching:** A parent, coach, or leader can play the *Blame Game* or the *Change Game*. In the *Blame Game*, the *SOL ideals* in the Scout Oath and Law are used as clubs to beat transgressors. In the *Change Game*, the *SOL ideals* are used to guide and help people become better. *Blame Game* coaches focus on what they *do not* want. *Change Game* coaches focus on what they *do* want.

One morning, my young son picked up a pitcher of milk. I told him *three* times to put it down. He disobeyed and spilled milk on the table and floor. I said angrily, "If you ever do that again you will be grounded for the rest of your life! Now, get a rag and clean it up!" He started whimpering. His mom said, "Honey, he's just a little boy." I did not care! Mercy was not going to rob justice. As I drove to work, I was still mad and thinking about the spilled milk. "If he continues disobeying his parents, he will become another Laman and Lemuel. How can I make sure he honors and obeys his parents?" About halfway to work, the spirit interrupted and said, "You never taught him how to pour." Anger changed to excitement as I started planning a "pouring lesson". That evening we sat on stools at the sink with a little water in a pitcher. At first, he was "fearful" and spilled the water into the sink. We laughed and then got ready for another try. Soon we were trying different glasses and amounts of water. After 20 minutes, he was excited to have "show and tell" for his mom.

Some people *love* pictures like this one because they can see a 3D image. Others *hate* them because they have tried unsuccessfully many times to see 3D. (After a 30 second eye exam, I have helped over 100 of these people see 3D. It now takes about 3-5 minutes.) Although the picture doesn't change, where you focus your eyes determines what you see, feel, and how you respond.



When my son spilled the milk, I saw disobedience to be punished. Later, I saw a teaching opportunity. My feelings and my response changed, but the events of the morning did not. In the morning, I was playing the *Blame Game* and using an *SOL ideal* ("A Scout is... obedient") as a club to punish my son. The prompting caused me to interpret ("see") the events differently. As a result, I switched to the *Change Game* and my relationship with my son improved dramatically.

- *SOL ideals* are like *stars* to guide us, *not clubs* to beat us!

**Conclusion:** Scout games are like flight simulators where boys can "crash" and learn without having to see a bishop or judge. We can help them be good sports and play the *Change Game* instead of the *Blame Game* or *Pride Game*. Future life choices are more important than their *SOL score* in a game.

- Good judgment comes from experience,... but experience comes from bad judgment!
- Blaming and guilt trips are not helpful in the *Change Game*.
- "Cease to find fault one with another" (D&C 88:124)
- There are no mistakes, only learning opportunities.
- Our *SOL score* (how we play) is more important than winning.

Scouting is a game with a purpose: "To prepare young people to make ethical choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law."

The BSA trefoil 🌟 is like the north point of compasses that used to guide sailors. The three points stand for the three parts of the Scout Oath that should guide Scouts in games and in life.



<sup>1</sup> Lance Pugmire, "Exceptions to the Rules," *LA Times*, 8/20/2006

<sup>2</sup> David Callahan, *The Cheating Culture* (note applies to paragraph)