HOW DARE THEY NOT LISTEN TO US?

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Category: Opinions

By Avedis Kevorkian, Philadelphia, PA USA, 31 October 2009
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I asked about the game.
"We lost," someone replied.

I asked the score, and someone said "It was two-nil."

I said, that wasn't too bad, and that it could have been worse. There were angry faces among the group.

"It should have been worse, they deserved to lose by more," someone said, "because they didn't listen to us."

I asked who the "they" were and who the "us" were.

The look on their faces indicated that I had hit a raw nerve. "The team is the 'they,' and we are the 'we,'" he said indicating the group.

I said that I didn't quite understand.

They must have realized they were talking to a mentally-retarded old man, because one of them patiently tried to explain. "We were shouting instructions from the stands," he said, "and the players weren't following our advice."

"Are you sure they heard you?" I asked.

"Of course," he said, "because many of them were looking at where we were sitting, and the manager actually got up from where he was sitting, and came toward us. He said something, but we could not hear what he said, however."

"What were you saying?" I asked

"We were telling them who the ball should be passed to, what kind of offense they should be using, what kind of defense they should be using, who should be trying to do the scoring, things like that."

"Maybe the manager was trying to tell you not to try to tell him and the players what to do."

"That may be so, but he has no right to tell us not to give advice."

"But, didn't you go there to encourage the team and enjoy the game?"

"Of course, but we also know better than he and the players how to play the game."

That surprised me, so I asked how he could believe such a thing.

He replied, "I have read probably every book on the subject." Another one said, "I have a huge collection of videos of soccer games, especially championship games." "And, besides," another said, "we are entitled to our opinions."

But, I said, that reading about games and seeing films doesn't make one an expert. I asked if any of them had ever played. If looks could kill, I would have been in a pool of blood. Finally, one of them said, "That makes no difference, they are our team, and we have a right to tell them what to do."

I said that they were all young--the older ones smiled at that--and I asked why none of them weren't on the team. I asked if they tried to play for the team.

They all, in one way or other, said that they hadn't, and I asked why.

They had reasons--they had jobs, they were going to university, they weren't in shape, they had other plans.

"So," I said, "you can't play on the team or you don't want to play on the team, but you feel you have the right to tell the manager and the players what to do." I said that perhaps they were rather arrogant to think they were qualified to tell the players on the field what to do. After all, I said that the players were facing the opposition, and the people in the stands were not.

"No," they all shouted, "we are not being arrogant. It's our right. Even if we didn't know anything, it is our right. But we do know everything. And, besides, who are you to question us?"

I said that I was a misguided Armenian who felt that the people on the sidelines shouldn't be telling the players what to do. That they should be encouraging the players.

"You can't be an Armenian," one of them said. “You don't even think like an Armenian,” another said.

I smiled and said that my father always claimed we were Armenian, and I thanked them for their time.

On my way home, I thought about the experience, and a long-held observation was reinforced:

There are some Armenians who think they own Armenia and all things Armenian and that no one else has the right to express an opinion without their approval. Of course, no contrary opinions will be accepted. Those who express contrary opinions become non-Armenians. Or, maybe, enemies.

Why this should be puzzled me and it was at that point, I stopped thinking because I realized that my simple mind wasn't able to come up with an answer.