

Coaching Curve Balls

The Florida State women's softball team won the NCAA Championship this week.

My wife and I are softball fans. Because of our many years in Oklahoma, we became fans of the NCAA Women's National Championship, which is always played in Oklahoma City.

Yes, we sit and watch games on TV. And of course, I have a book or an iPad in my lap. The games are exciting, and we always seem to have a team to cheer for in the series. My wife cheers for the underdog and I favor the school I have followed during the year.

This year I was excited to talk about the games with our social marketing colleague and former D1 softball pitcher, Missy Montgomery.

She's a terrific marketer and offered amazing commentary on the series as it progressed. She greatly dislikes Oregon's uniforms, players who eat popcorn during the game and coaches who set a bad example for the team.

It happened on a national stage this year. A college coach had a melt-down. It doesn't matter what school he coached. It shouldn't have mattered that an umpire made a bad call, which was verified by replay. The umpire's decision probably impacted the remainder of the series only because of the coach's behavior.

The coach was ejected from the game. His team began to play with an almost fatalistic attitude and their young faces reflected their entitlement to be called "victims." "Can you believe that call? They stole the game from us."

It was only the fourth inning. But the game was over and only a trip home awaited the team.

This coach led his team to lose. They followed as one.

It happens every day in churches, businesses and homes. Little, bad things happen, the leader reacts poorly, and bad outcomes rear up.

Leaders are on stage all day every day. We live in a fishbowl. Our actions are observed and often mimicked. We lead our teams to outcomes.

Leaders do not receive a free pass to behave poorly in any circumstance.

Every behavior of a leader affects a team.

Someone once said, "You're either a leader everywhere or nowhere."

Jesus said, "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they both not fall into a ditch?" (Luke 6:39)