

Published in Michiana Family Magazine September 2013

The coach blew his whistle. Rather than run for water the team members swarmed a couple of players, this was serious business.

My boys were at the center of this growing circle. Right before they were swallowed by the hungry crowd, I saw the puzzled looks on their faces.

As I debated whether or not to go and check on the herd, the little football players' heads whipped in my direction. Derek and Dean emerged from the center of the crowd and led the way to where I sat. The crew followed close behind.

My nerves quivered as the pack converged upon my chair. It was clear something needed an answer. Shoving in from the back was #49, "Did they ask her?" The others shushed him.

I scanned the nearby parents. They were not fazed by the commotion. I trembled, what could be so important to bring a pack of football players to my chair?

"Momma..." Derek started. He looked at Dean. Dean nodded and focused on my face. Derek started again, "Momma, who was born first?" As the question left his lips the pack shoved in tight, my chest constricted. This water break was taking quite a long time.

"Well, um, you both came close to the same time," I lied, hoping the pack couldn't smell my fear. "Oh look, the coach is waving you back; better hurry or he'll make you run."

Why would I lie to a pack of eight and nine year old children? Well, for starters, I knew this day would come. I knew at some point my boys' would want to know who was born first. Then, the peace I had protected would be shattered. "I'm older, that's why I get to pick first," would replace the current decision-making method of long rounds of rock, paper, scissors.

I assumed this moment would come from the boys alone. I did not expect to be cornered by a pack of boys in shoulder pads and helmets. I do not care their ages. It is a bit overwhelming sitting in the midst of the pack. Especially, when the herd was hopped up waiting for the information bomb that would give them the ability to torment the last one out.

With the crew back on the field, I had less than thirty minutes to come up with a game plan of my own. All I had to do was convince the boys that 45 minutes meant nothing when you were born on the same day.

With shoulder pads, helmets, and bodies loaded in the truck for the ride home, I held my breath. The question would arise at any moment. The boys sat in the back discussing who they wanted to invite to their birthday.

Derek spoke. He had a question. My chest tightened. "Momma, how many kids can we invite to our party?"

"What?" I was not thinking about body counts for parties, I was focused on *the* question.

No longer able to contain myself, I began the conversation. “Uh, guys? Did you want to talk more about the question you asked at practice?”

“About who was born first?” Dean asked.

“Yes,” I trembled.

“No,” they answered in unison. “How many can we invite to our party?”

I was worried about the catastrophe to come when my children blind-sided me without a care in the world. Moments like those make me proud of my boys and the lessons they teach me. I thanked my lucky stars for smart boys and vowed in the future I would not spend years fretting over a simple question. I would address it and move on.

My boys have since learned who came first and have yet to use it as a means of solving disputes. I have kept my word and not fretted over simple questions, except when the boys’ teacher asked about splitting them up for fourth grade. But that was it, I swear.