WhatAboutMe?

(Perspective is Reality)

WHAT ABOUT ME?

A child's perspective in an adult world

by David P. Hillgrove

What about me?

The father hugged his son, as they readied for his first game. Shoes intact, uniform baggy, number proudly displayed. The seven year old boys and girls were fresh and peppy that day. The parents encouraging and supportive. The coaches helped; the ref smiled. Few cared who won.**And it was good.**

Several seasons passed. The game began to look like a soccer match, with players passing and dribbling and even the parents and fans beginning to know what they should be looking for. **Sort of.**

But the team **Mom** wanted to give the boys a special juice for their post game drink; they wanted water because it tasted better when they were thirsty. And **she** complained that **she** felt that **she** wasn't doing enough for the team by just giving them water. So **she** brought this juice. And wrapped each can up with little ribbons and name tags, with smiles and hearts all over it. But the players didn't want all of that. They wanted water. And the little boy asked "**What about me?**"

Soon the boys and girls grew, and a special "select" team was formed. It was to travel afar, to sights as yet unknown, to play unnamed teams. It was to be good for all. So the coach set up some tryouts. And he tested each player for skills and for desire. He tried to make them fair so that all had a chance. One little boy did not want to play. He only tried a little and did not run fast. He wanted to stop playing so he could read more, and draw pictures with his friends. But **his daddy** said "**I** will have none of that. **No son of mine** will sit around idly while other men's children play sports." And the little boy asked " **What about me?**"

The team was chosen. They played their games and they won a few. But they did not win enough to make **some mommies** happy. Later one would learn that very little would make these mommies happy. These "**ladies**" yelled at the coach and talked behind his back, because he let all of the boys play in every game. He even gave them each a "start" because he had confidence in them. But that did not matter, it seemed. The boys loved their coach because he was so friendly and helpful. But he was told to leave, by the **parents**. And the boys asked "**What about me?** What about us?"

The new coach hollered and screamed all of next season. Whenever the boys did one thing well, he wondered why they didn't do two. He called them names and taught them to hold jerseys and kick players in the shin. But they won. Sort of. They won games, anyway. But the mean ole fat coach who had never played soccer, did not make it fun. Not like before. And the **mommies** said: "But **we** want to make sure that you win so that you have fun". And the little boy asked "**What about me?**"

Soon a rival league began to invite players to play on their select team. They called the parents at home and wrote them letters, and had all of them meet in one big room. The **parents** listened to these words and promises, and **they** talked between themselves. The **moms and dads** wondered if **they** would be as happy in the new league. The old league leaders got angry and complained. Then they pleaded with the parents, and told **them** how bad it would look. But no one asked the boys, even throughout all of the planning. And the little boy asked "**What about me?**"

The games went on, all across the land. Everywhere one could see, there were goals and nets and lined fields and practices. And boys practiced hard so that someday people would notice how good they are. And **parents** went to games, but not to cheer. **They** shouted and hollered at the opposing players, even at players on their own team. **They** cursed and kicked during the day, and discussed how good recreational

sports were for children at night. **They** learned to yell at refs; and the boys learned too. The high school rule makers and administrators all met in one big room one day. **They** smoked cigars and ate big sandwiches. **They** laughed and told jokes, and wrote some rules down. **They** talked about some of them, and wondered which people would disagree with their rule changes. But **they** never called to speak with any coaches. Or parents. Or players. And they all asked "**What about me?** What about us?"

The young men became good; some played for one team, some played for another. Soon their high school coach invited them to play on his team.
They said "That is good. Now we play for two teams. We will become better for this!" And the coach said "No, that would not be good for you. We must take care of you and teach you what is good for you. We must tell you that you cannot play for both teams, only ours." And the young man, thought awhile and asked " **What about me?**"

The NCAA met in a city by a big river, where the music was good. **They** spoke with news reporters, and were seen on TV. And **they** passed rules that changed the college team's seasons. College soccer team's seasons. Because **they** had seen so many problems in football. And basketball. At big schools. With big programs. So now all the sports had to suffer. And the teams asked "**What about me?** What about us?"

The bells tolled and the birds chirped and a new day arose. **He** earned his diploma and returned home. **He** worked and married, but what **he** most liked was to coach. Because **he** could work with the young, and teach them to try, and **he** learned a lot about himself. **He** did not know who scored the most, or who was going to play the most. **He** laughed a lot. **He** had fun. **They** had fun. And they liked him. And it was good.