



New Jersey Middle School Ethics Bowl

Spare Case 1

You Can't Chant That!

Cheyenne is thrilled to have scored tickets to the upcoming basketball game between her school, State, and its biggest rival, A&M. Both are doing very well this season. All week leading up to the game, State has hosted events to increase excitement for the match-up, including pep rallies and a parade through their small city. Cheyenne is most excited because State's fans are known to be some of the most passionate in the country, creating an atmosphere that gives their team a significant edge. The State fans cheer for their own players, of course, but they also try to distract the visiting team with coordinated booing, chanting, and other attempts to get into opponents' heads. She is excited to be a part of such an intensely spirited match-up.

When game day arrives, fans have set their sights on A&M's top player, Ishmael. He is the biggest threat to State's chances. If he is on his A-game, A&M would be hard to beat. So, every time he commits a foul, the State fans point and chant "You-Can't-Do-That!"; every time he makes a mistake, they point and scream "It's all your fault! It's all your fault!"; every once in a while, during a dead ball they yell, in unison, "Hey, Ishmael... NO ONE LIKES YOU!"

Cheyenne loves feeling involved in the State community of fans but as the game goes on, she feels conflicted about the targeted chanting against Ishmael. On the one hand, the crowd's antics feel a little like bullying to her, ganging up on someone, even trying to belittle him, with the explicit purpose of hindering his performance. Cheyenne's friends, on the other hand, stress the importance of the context of the interaction with Ishmael. "Of course, it's nothing personal," they say. "Everyone understands that the fans are part of the game. It's all in fun and in the spirit of the competition. Plus, it's the biggest game of the season!"

Question: Is it ethical for a sports fan to heckle the opposing team?