

Sledging (Trash Talking)

By Zac Metcalfe

There has been a lot in the news recently about sledging, or “trash-talking,” whether between Australia and India in the cricket or from Richard Sherman at the Seattle Seahawks in the NFL. Sledging is a huge part of many different sports all over the world, of all different levels. With the beginning of the Cricket World Cup around the corner, let’s stop and ask the question, should sledging be part of how a Christian participates in sport?

I have experienced a lot of sledging in my sporting career. Whether that being in competitive A-grade cricket, C-grade cricket, college sport, competitive AFL or just social sport in general, sledging is present in many different environments. Sometimes I have been a recipient of the sledge and sometimes I am the one doing the sledging. I have heard a sledge in cricket that had everyone on the field in stitches (including the batsman and umpire), resulting in the bowler being unable to bowl the ball. It was great! It created memories and common enjoyment between both teams.

I have also heard of some sledges that have resulted in a batsman taking off his gloves and shaping up to a fieldsman. Just have a look at some of the sledges from Australia’s cricket team online, it will ruin the image of some of your heroes.

What is the point of sledging? Why does it happen?

Traditionally it is designed to put people off their game. Sometimes it is to distract your opponent, so that you can gain an advantage. Sometimes it is to make everyone laugh by cracking a joke. Sometimes it is just what you do. Other times it is used for intimidation.

In James 3:3-4, the Bible talks about how the tongue is similar to a rudder on a ship, or a bridle on a horse. It is the part of the body that sets us on course. James 3 continues on to say how dangerous the tongue is, how it corrupts the whole body (v5-9).

It is interesting to think that what we say on a sporting field can not only have effects on the person it is directed to, but can also affect the person who is saying things, the people who listen, and even you and I (Ephesians 4:29).

This turns sledging and anything we say into a big deal, because it has a big affect on so many different people!

So what do we do? Do we participate in sledging or do we remove it from our game?

Here are some quick questions to help you decide:

What’s your heart behind the sledge?

- Why are you sledging? (If you are not good enough to beat someone without sledging them to put them off their game, go and train harder!)
- What is your aim?
- Are you showing disrespect to the person who is made in the image of God?

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Who you are sledging?

- How will they take it?
- Will they laugh?
- Will it put them off their game?

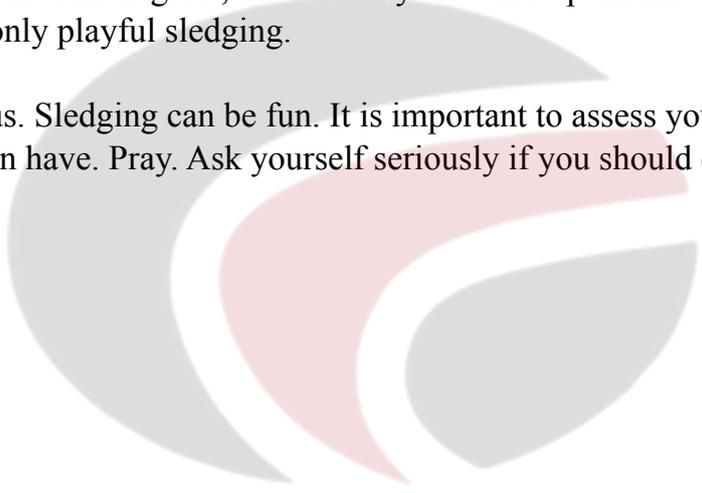
How does it make Jesus look?

- What does it tell non-Christians about Jesus?
- Is Jesus glorified?

I have gotten it wrong many times. There have been times when I didn't think about the person I was sledging or when I have misread how they would react. When that happens it is right to repent and apologise to the person you have hurt and the people that have overheard.

I have also seen sledging being used as fun banter between friends, and also to create friendships on the field. This is great, but it is easy to over step the line. It is important not to build a relationship only playful sledging.

Sledging is dangerous. Sledging can be fun. It is important to assess your sledging. Reflect on the impact you can have. Pray. Ask yourself seriously if you should continue to sledge or not.



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