

The Two Greatest Lessons that Team-Sports Teach

I believe that team sports have the greatest teaching potential of perhaps any organized activity in our world today. This is because all of life is social, and we as humans are social beings. In athletics, the first thing you learn is the value of teamwork: a coordinated and cohesive effort on the part of many, in the pursuit of one goal.

Teamwork teaches more than learning to come together and work together on a field... it teaches people how to unite for a common cause—how to come together and work together in the greatest game of them all... the game of life.

With that being said, I believe the two greatest lessons that team-sports teach are:

1. The importance of treating all people with respect: When you step into a huddle, you don't have to like each other, you don't have to be like each other... but you have to treat each other with respect. Your pasts may be separate, but your futures are linked as one. Within any team or organization, the individual group members must learn to come together, work together, and play together, in order to win together. This is true not only in the football huddle, but more importantly, in the *human* huddle as well.

2. The importance of learning to subordinate your own individual concerns, in order to do what is best for the greater good: In sports, this means putting aside your desire to be a star, to score a lot of points, or to rack up incredible statistics... in order to help the team win. If you are a receiver and you need to block every play in order to help your team win, then that is what you have to do. If you are a defensive lineman and you need to take on double-teams every place in order to help your team win,

then that is what you need to do. If you are a practice-squad player and you need to work as hard as you can all week long in order to make the rest of your teammates better... in order to you're your team win, then that is what you must do. After all, it is important to understand that... ***Life is not all about you; it is about others.***

In a family, you have to make sacrifices all the time: you have to put the interests and concerns of others before your own. Whether it is putting your spouse's welfare, your children's welfare (for example: working two jobs to help feed your family or to pay tuition), or your family's future... the important lesson to learn is that you have to do what is best for the larger group... whether it is a team, a company, a family, or a community.

An important component of this is humility. In team sports, so often your success is the result of other peoples' efforts: teammates who blocked or threw a pass, coaches who called the play and taught you how to execute it properly, and so on and so on. In individual sports, it is very easy to say "Hey, I did this on my own." In team sports, however, you are forced to acknowledge the role that others played in your success. Very often in life, this also is the case, as there so many times are other individuals whose efforts and investments—time and energy—help provide you with the opportunity and the ability to succeed.

Once again, it is important to understand that *life is not all about you*. In order to achieve and succeed in life, you must be willing to give up a piece of yourself in order to become a part of something that is bigger than yourself. In order to accomplish something that is larger than you, you must buy into and contribute to something that is greater than yourself. You must be willing to put your ego aside—to forget your own wants, desires, opinions, and biases—and take up the interests and cause of the greater whole, and you must do it for the benefit of the greater good... whether it is for a team, a family, an organization, or all of society.

~ In the game of football, individuals from all walks of life must learn to *come together, work together, and achieve together*. In the game of life, the same holds true. If everyone could learn the value of the lessons that sport teaches, how great of a place would we be able to make this world of ours?

~ Let's not wait for someone to line a football field and break out a ball-bag. Let's learn to *come together, work together, and achieve together* right here and right now. Let's not wait until it's time to put the uniforms on before we begin to consider ourselves all members of the same team. Let's embrace this "game" of ours and this "team" of ours... and let's get to making this world the place that it very well could and should be.

Most people spend their whole lives wondering whether or not they make a difference...

COACHES DO NOT HAVE THAT PROBLEM!

Coach Frank DiCocco