

WVW Parent/Athlete – Coach’s Newsletter –vol.1

Playing Favorites by Frank Tribendis

Just a short while ago, a parent like previously done by other parents and/or athletes accused me of “having favorites” on our team. I am sure that many others have thought that of other coaches. The implication is that it is a terrible sin. When I was younger, I thought it was terrible also. The individuals are right. I do have favorites. My favorites are those athletes who most fervently do what I and our assistants ask of them. Those that do, I do give more attention to. I probably talk to them more. I probably spend more time teaching them. I also expect more out of them.

The implication that individuals make, is that my favorites get better than the others because they are my favorites, and that is somehow unfair. These individuals are mistaking cause for effect.

The fact is that athletes who come ready to learn, ready to listen, ready to act on what they learned and try it my way, even if it is more challenging, more difficult than they imagined, were ready to get more out of the program. And they are my favorites.

As a coach, I have only one thing to offer to an athlete. That is, my attention. Which means that I attend to their needs. The consequence of inattention, lack of effort, unwillingness or un readiness to learn or just plain offensive or disruptive behavior is my inattention to that athlete.

How could it be other than this? If you have three children, and you spend all of your time and energy working with the one that is badly behaved, what does that tell your other two children? It tells them that to capture your attention, they should behave badly. What we reward, is what we get.

As a coach, I want athletes who are eager to learn, eager to experiment to improve, eager to work hard. I want athletes who come to me to help develop their skills both mental and physical, and are willing to accept what I have to offer. Otherwise, why have them come to me? And I am going to reward that athlete with my attention. In so doing, I encourage others to become like the above athlete. If I spend my time with the slothful, the disruptive, I would only be encouraging that behavior.

The link that I want to forge is between attention and excellence. Excellence in the sense of achieving all that is possible, and desired. My way of forging that, is to provide my attention to those who “attend” to me. This does of course result in increased performance for those that do so. I am a professional coach/teacher, and when I pay attention to a person, that person is going to improve. Over time, this makes it appear that my “favorites” are the better athletes. Not so at all. The better athletes are those that pay attention, and thus become my favorites.

What individuals do not realize is that you must have favorites if anyone is to develop in a positive fashion. The coach’s job is to reward those who exhibit positive developmental behaviors. Those are my “favorites,” and they should be. We run a goal and team oriented program. Those who want to own and share in these individual and team goals are definitely my favorites.