

More Sports Center Sound Bites

In my last blog I pointed out that when coaches rant, they are often filled with high drama that make for good sound bites on ESPN's Sports Center. More often than not, they are also valuable to you. If you listen closely enough you may learn what coaches look for in their players, and in some cases a coach may also reveal what players would ideally want to see in their coaches.

Les Miles recently ranted after a come from behind win against Ole Miss. He talked about the perseverance of his sixteen seniors and their overall character in general.

Then he commented about his own playing career.

"It would be said about my career at Michigan. It was a flop! I under-played my own expectations. My head coach would've probably told me you over-played your physical limitations!"

Some have since called this rant a tirade.

Miles shouted, *"My point to you is there is no such thing as a flop that takes the field for this football team!"*

"How #\$\$%& easy would it have been to say it's their night?." He asked.*

New York Yankee's Director of International Player Development, Pat McMahon believes that a player's number one responsibility is to earn the respect of your teammates and coaching staff. If we consider that being a solid citizen and good student are givens when it comes to earning that respect, then Miles has outlined the rest.

He didn't feel such affection for his seniors simply because they won. He didn't even mention his team's record.

He felt that to a man, from the scout team player to an NFL prospect, that they had over-played their physical limitations. They played above their perceived capabilities.

It is possible that to an extent every athlete may feel that they have under-performed their own expectations. What baseball player doesn't want to bat .1000?

But, if you really want to earn respect, true respect- play above what most people believe your God given abilities would allow you to do.

David Eckstein, a walk-on at the University of Florida who became the 2006 World Series MVP serves as a prime example of an athlete who over-performed his physical limitations. Former New York Ranger Adam Graves and current New York Giant Victor Cruz are beloved in the tri-state area for that same reason.

But, could a rant from a coach also explain what players may look for in their coaches?

About a week ago Louisville football coach, Charlie Strong turned down an offer from the University of Tennessee, a high profile SEC program. After receiving the offer, he turned to his family and weighed his options. Then, he met the media, most of whom expected him to announce that he was leaving.

Many were surprised by his announcement. He said it came down to the loyalty shown to him by his athletic director and the Louisville community.

"We were 2-4 (last year), and I was 9-10 at the time (overall), and the guy hands me an extension," Strong said. "I am like, 'How do you walk away from someone who really trusts and believes in you?' It's about relationship and people believing in you and trusting in you."

He passionately emphasized the importance of backing up your words with your actions.

"You say, 'I can go beat this team, I can go beat this team,'" he said. "You let your ego get in the way, but you realize it's about people and how you affect their lives. Leading to me is not about telling people what to do. It's about serving others. When I thought about leaving, I kept going back to we haven't finished the job yet. We are still growing together. We have a lot of work to do."

Then he informed his team of why he chose to stay.

"I said, 'When we talk to you we always talk about trust, and we talk about being committed," he said. "A lot of you guys grew up without a father figure and a lot of people walked out of your life. Now you are looking at me and saying, 'Coach, you might do the same thing.' I couldn't do that to them."

There is little doubt in my mind that the type of loyalty Strong spoke about was instrumental in his team's upset win at Rutgers that helped them earn the Big East Championship and just the second BCS bowl bid in their school's history.

If I was one of Strong's players listening to his rant, I'd start running down the tunnel for the Sugar Bowl right now even though the game isn't until January 2nd. He has inspired his players to over-play their physical limitations!