



School Comes Before the Team

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Winter break is a great time for kids to spend time with family and to recharge their batteries for school.

First semester is just about over, and it's almost time for kids to get back into the flow and thinking again about what should be their number one priority – schoolwork.

With basketball, wrestling, hockey, gymnastics, and other sports all in full swing, it's easy to put studies off to the side.

That's where our student-athletes need to keep their priorities in order.

The number one priority needs to be the pursuit of wisdom through education. This doesn't guarantee wealth and riches, but when priorities are in order through education, the wisdom obtained will enable richly rewarding lives. In other words, when a purpose for living exists and we are content with that, we have greater wealth than we could ever imagine.

Remember, playing for school sports teams is a privilege and is earned in part by successfully meeting the academic requirements of a school's athletic code.

Simply stated, if a student-athlete's homework isn't completed, athletics should be taken away. This needs to be clear and consistently carried out in order to accentuate the importance of an education.

Tying athletics to the educational system is valuable because it teaches our kids the importance of self-discipline.

With priorities in order, sports become the recreational outlet they originally were intended to be.

There always will be a small portion of the student population gifted enough to pursue athletics as a career, but the NCAA commercials displaying how the majority of athletes major in something other than athletics is quite accurate.

Simple math shows that the number of high school student-athletes becoming paid for the sport they love is low, so all students better pay attention in class. It's just not going to happen for most.

Why do priorities fall out of line?

It's unfortunate, but some student-athletes don't have the proper guidance at home. Organizations for younger kids, like the Boys and Girls Club, can be a great place for them to get this instruction. A church's youth group is another place to seek proper tutelage.

Success in the pursuit of material possessions (trophies and athletic awards) can cause misplaced confidence, satisfaction, and complacency. These awards don't matter without a proper educational foundation.

Procrastination also will cause havoc with priorities. Often, we delay doing work that seems difficult, boring or disagreeable. To continue putting off what is good and necessary shows lack of discipline and poor stewardship of time.

Jobs we don't enjoy require extra concentration, teamwork, lots of encouragement and accountability. Team study halls or tutors are great ways to get this extra help, which will help lighten our loads.

When we give our best and priorities are in order, and then success in athletics follows, it feels even sweeter.

That's what champions are made of.