

Michael
'05

Building Competitive Teams: *Fostering Cooperative Relationships*

Every successful team or organization needs a visionary. By accident or by some serendipitous design, that's you, baby. You're the engine that drives this rig – and leaving all clichés aside – I've come to witness that the teams that are most successful seem to have similar characteristics. Here's a sampling:

- Developed and articulated philosophy.

Every coach will (and should) have their own. This philosophy must match the profile of your team(s). If you are a tyrannical slave-driver, your team is not likely to trust you or your methods, let alone respond to your coaching. For that reason, you may wish to let your philosophy come about organically.

Some basic tenets I subscribe to include:

1. We're a learning community, all with gifts, talents, and interests to share with one another. If we're in the middle of practice and come across a word, factoid, or piece of information with which we are unfamiliar, we stop what we're doing and take the time to *learn*. I don't believe in memorizing and I don't put much stock in lists. I want the kids to *learn* the information for the sole purpose of improving the quality of their life. Travel, literature, the arts, etc., are all enhanced with a wide and inclusive base of knowledge. We're not learning for some academic contest – we are learning because we love to learn.
2. Exclusive franchise. It is a privilege for me to spend practice and competition time with my kids. They are giving time that they have so very little of . . . I respect and appreciate that. For this reason, I never ask my kids to choose between Knowledge Bowl and other activities. If they have football, speech, mock trial practice . . . great! See you when we can. If the core philosophy is learning, then what is more valuable to a student than experience? Isn't that what high school is about? The return on this philosophy is increased loyalty and interest, as well as a developed sense of responsibility to the team.
3. Relationships are pivotal. Building empathic relationships and maintaining these ties are what makes spending these evenings and weekends together worthwhile and fun. Truth be told, we're a dysfunctional, functional family and we embrace it.
4. Dr. Mike. Like it or not, we're responsible for the tone and attitude of our teams. If there's a rift or ruffled feathers on my team, it is imperative that the matter be addressed quickly and all energies re-focused on the goals at hand. While not a common occurrence, it's hard to not notice when morale is low or feelings have been hurt.

5. One size does not fit all. Coaching is an art – a sleep-deprived, follicle-challenging – art. A cookie-cutter approach doesn't seem to work with kids. (Go figure!) The best coaches that I've seen have genuine relationships with their students – they laugh, they play, they chide, they discipline, they *coach*. Above all, they engage their kids in the process and fun of learning.
6. Choose to embrace or deflate “nerd myth.” There's no way around it: there are some good old-fashioned nerds in Knowledge Bowl. Celebrate it! Celebrate the nerd within you. Share your own nerdiness with your kids by imparting your own knowledge, stories, and observations. Chances are, your kids aren't full-time Knowledge Bowlers. Since my district is so small, most of my kids are involved in multiple athletic, musical, and academic endeavors. Encourage their broad interests and have fun with the stereotypes.

- Interpersonal Relationships

each team needs some one that can control the interpersonal stuff
- keep team from getting discouraged, frustrated etc

- play for every point

- you have to have an edge. To keep kids focused & on track
↳ have kids set numerical goal (ex: 20 pts)

* have kids number on sheet from 20 to 1
check them off as they gain pts during a round