

Coach Koehr's Swimming Awards Banquet Talk – March 14, 2010

Do You Feel Lucky?

- Old expression that luck is when opportunity meets preparation.
- Sounds cute, but I really believe it
- I've noticed that there are
 - some people seem to have all of the luck
 - some people seem to have no luck
- Now is that statistically possible?
- Of course, not. So how do you get lucky?
- Here are three thoughts I've had on how to make opportunity and preparation meet:
 1. Always must be preparing
 - The biggest problem with bringing preparation into the path of opportunity is that you usually don't know what opportunity you need to prepare for
 - So you have to prepare yourself every chance you get
 - A simple example is push-ups during dryland
 - How many of you believe that you could do 5 or 10 push-ups if you did 3 or 4 sets of as many as you could do 3 days per week over 15 weeks?
 - How many of you did dryland with the team over the 15 weeks of swim season?
 - How many of you can't do 5 or 10 push-ups
 - Opportunity lost
 - Maybe it doesn't matter, but maybe it does
 - Push-ups are a required test for a ROTC scholarship
 - Which could allow you to afford a good college that you wouldn't otherwise be able to go to
 - Which could allow you to get a job you wouldn't otherwise be able to get and make the relationships that you couldn't otherwise make
 - Or allow you to meet that untouchable varsity athlete who might change your life
 - Which would be very lucky
 - But if you weren't prepared to do push-ups, you may have missed it all

- And never know it
 - When I was swimming in high school or doing triathlon clinics did I ever imagine that the opportunity would present itself to me to be a swimming coach?
 - Or when I studied Nuclear Engineering at Notre Dame, did I ever think I have the chance to teach Pre-Calc at Seton?
2. Must take the risk and take advantage the opportunity
- Hannah Lowell at Woodberry and then again at DAC Champs.
 - Joe Kosten
 - Not the fastest of the Fab 14s, but whether he realizes it or not, in another 2 or 3 years when the Fab 14s are upperclassman, our boys team has the potential to win multiple State Championships again.
 - If Joe is a big part of that, it will be because of choices he's making now on how he works in practice and the commitments he makes to maybe swim at higher level.
 - Works for you adults also:
 - They call it risk for a reason, as the many entrepreneurs in the room can attest
 - But some of you have that customer right now who would be a great anchor client for a new business
 - Or that great idea that you know will work and that co-worker who would be a great business partner
 - But you have that good 6-figure job that's you love to pretend is secure while you complain about it?
 - Is the Machine (i.e. Lauren Donohoe) the fastest girl in Prince William County? No.
 - Actually, I can think of a couple swimmers who are faster.
 - So why is she the Swimmer of the Year?
 - Because when opportunity presented itself, as it does so often at then of a relay, she took advantage of it.
 - Or when she was 4th out of the last turn in 100 Free at States, she just decided she wanted it more.
 - In the heat of battle, surrounded by opportunity, she made a choice.....which brings me to my last thought.....

3. The luck you have or don't have is the result of choices you make
 - Sure there's genuine luck
 - like funding a parking space for a 15 passenger van in front of Madison Square Garden right before a show during Christmas week
 - And yes we don't all start with the same level of opportunities in our lives.
 - Yes, I was lucky to be born
 - to a mother strong enough to climb out of the poverty of Italian immigrants who both died when she was still young and
 - to a father who rose from life in a small flat in inner-city St. Louis to the rank of Admiral,
 - but how many people with similar "luck" do we all know who made bad choices and aren't so "lucky" now?
 - and how many people do we know who started with no "luck" at all and are now the luckiest people you know?
 - It's because it is not about "luck". It is about choices.
4. Do you choose to prepare yourself in every way possible, even when what you are preparing yourself for is not clear?
 - And do you choose to recognize the opportunities all around and then take advantage of them?
5. I see my job as coach to be so much more than coach, mentor and maybe even role model.
 - I see myself as a generator of opportunity.
 - I try to put as many of you as in a position to excel.
 - But I realize that, no matter what I do, you still have to make the choice to be excellent
6. So yes, it is true that luck is the nexus of opportunity and preparation, but you can choose to be lucky.
 - As Clint Eastwood famously said, "Do you feel lucky?"
 - I sure hope so.