

Coach Koehr's Swimming Awards Banquet Talk – March 2, 2014

Does Winning Really Matter Anyway?

- *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth* Matt 5:5
- I've heard it said at Seton that winning doesn't really matter
 - Does my emphasis on personal records mean that I believe that myself?
 - I don't.
 - And I certainly don't think that our faith teaches us that.
- Our faith does teach us to be “meek”,
 - often completely misinterpret the term “meekness” in the way that Christ meant it.
 - St. Thomas Aquinas,
 - **“meekness is a virtue which moderates the passion of anger according to the dictates of reason, and calms the desire for revenge”.**
 - Nothing in that definition implies the **capitulation** or **timidity** often associated with the term “meek”.
 - Quite the opposite in fact.
- To demonstrate the spiritual strength to be **truly meek**,
 - you need to be in complete **control of your passions** and direct them toward good
 - so called “righteous anger”.
 - You also need to be **humble**
 - The humble person acknowledges God's gifts and uses them
 - That's why I have such an emphasis on personal records
 - You've heard me say many times
 - If we all continue to get better, the winning takes care of itself
 - A bit of hyperbole for sure, but that's the basis of my philosophy of coaching
- Let's challenge ourselves a bit here on what this means in real life

- Think about times in your life when you
 - Failed to control your emotion
 - Let that emotion turn negative
 - And made what you wanted the most important thing
- I was overwhelmed with how un-meek I can be as I was preparing this talk
 - Some of you watched me deal with the woman running the State meet who did it quite a bit differently than I would have
 - Her gifts were quite a bit different than mine so she handled some things differently
 - Did I work to help make her successful at all times?
- Any of you have trouble working with someone else
 - To the point where you can no longer even work together to make good things that you both agree on happen?
- Ever seen a parent of an 8 year old on a soccer sideline?
 - I used to have to go to some of the games my kids were refereeing and stand next to those guys
 - Lost so much control of their passion that they are yelling at a 15-year old girls about a call in a U-8 game?
- Ever struggle with your mother-in-law?
 - Or daughter-in-law?
 - Automatically assume the worst in their motivations
 - These are relationships that engender a lot of emotion
 - Do you let that emotion get the best of you and harm the family as a whole?
- And who can bring out the worst in a parent better than a teenage son or daughter?
 - And vica-versa
 - How hard is it to be meek and **just say “yes ma’am”** rather than shouting demands for an explanation?
- These are all every day examples of when **“meekness” is vital**
 - Control your passions and turn them towards good
 - And be humble by putting the needs of another person before the needs of yourself

- **Sports are a great place to learn meekness**
 - Competition can **bring out** both the **best** and the **worst** in people
 - To be truly **meek in competition**,
 - you have to have the **strength of character** to
 - **turn** your anger **inward**
 - to **maximize** the gifts that **God** gave you
 - rather than trying to **tear down** your **competition**.
 - So being meek actually requires incredible strength of character.
 - Fortitude and courage!
- Taking Meek to the Next Level
 - If you really want to take “meek” to the next level,
 - you **compete is such a charitable way**
 - that you actually **make your opponent** better too.
 - Taken this way,
 - if you don’t try to win,
 - you are actually doing your competitor a disservice!
 - So when we pray before a meet, what are we praying for?
 - To win, but only indirectly
 - What we are really praying for is the courage to be meek
 - We are thanking God for his gifts
 - We are asking for the strength to maximize them
 - And, we are asking for the courage to use them to make others better
 - It is in competition that we are able to push ourselves to get the most from God’s gifts
 - And inspire others to get the most out of their gifts
- **This is why winning matters.**
- Let’s think **back to 2002** and what swimming was like for us and for the DAC
 - We practiced in in a 5 lane meter pool
 - We had meets in a dark meter pool in Fredericksburg, a basement pool in Strasburg, and a pool that wasn’t even 25 yards at RMA

- We scored our meets on a spreadsheet (show example)
- No one used Team Manager or Meet Manager software
- There was no scoreboard
- There was never a CTS – everything was hand timed
- We had to try to get relay splits with stopwatches on the side of the pool
- Entries were done by hand
- Kids had handwritten cards that were brought with them to the blocks
- No one went to States as a team – it was an individual thing since that was all that mattered
- Then by 2010
 - We won every event at DAC Champs (except a DQ'd medley relay)
 - We held every DAC Record
 - Our closest conference competitor scored half of our points all year long
- And today
 - We practice in 13 lanes
 - The majority of DAC meets are at the finest facilities
 - Everyone in the DAC takes electronic timing with names and splits on a scoreboard for granted
 - We look up our times and splits and improvement on a web site that the whole conference uses to get information about our meets
 - It is a conference requirement to use TM and Meet Manager is used to score every meet
 - Our girls have still never been beaten by a conference opponent
 - But,
 - Seton only has 12 of the 22 conference records
 - And someone other than Seton is the Boys conference champs for the 1st time since 1996.
- So, I will wonder aloud:

- if we did not have such a long history of winning and excellence at Seton
 - Would this transformation have taken place?
- Certainly there is some **excellent coaching** going on in the DAC now
 - But how much of even that is **because** Seton has **raised the bar**?
 - They certainly may have improved without competing against Seton
 - But all of us who compete know that **we like to beat the best.**
 - And Seton has been the best for a long time.
- **Now others are the ones who need to learn to be meek.**
 - They are the ones who **need to push us** to be better stewards of the gifts God gave us
 - by being **even better stewards themselves**
 - and when that happens, **all of DAC Swimming benefits.**
 - I doubt FCS are going to happy with just one DAC Championship – at least I hope not.
 - And watch out for those Wakefield boys!
- **Sportsmanship**
 - “meek” is **synonymous** with being a great sport.
 - the worst team always seems to get the sportsmanship trophy?
 - Being happy about losing is not good sportsmanship
 - it is the opposite of good sportsmanship
 - those who are content with losing are not making anyone with whom they compete any better.
 - FCS
 - particularly their coaches,
 - great example of meekness in Christian sense
 - and the Seton boys are going to return the favor next season ;-)
- You’ve heard me say
 - Seton Swimming is about a lot more than swimming

- In addition to
 - the personal records,
 - the sense of accomplishment,
 - the trophies and
 - the championships
- here's what I want you to take away from this season:

Christian Meekness in athletic competition is not capitulation or timidity.

Christian Meekness is the spiritual strength to help your competitors over the bar that you raised by winning.

- Coach Jim Koehr