

Faith: The Cornerstone of Coaching

by Frank Allocco

“Keep your dreams alive. To achieve anything requires faith and belief in yourself, vision, hard work, determination, and dedication. All things are possible for those who believe.” Gail Devers

It has been a great privilege to be the Head Basketball Coach at De La Salle for the past 14 years. When I first met with Terry Eidson, the former Athletic Director, to discuss the Head Coaching position we had a lengthy conversation on the Mission Statement of the School, the Philosophy of the Athletic Department and the integration of our faith into coaching. He gave me the book, Jean Baptiste De La Salle which I eagerly read. I was impressed and intrigued by the life of this great man who dedicated his life to his faith in God and to the education of young people. I was excited to build a program that would reinforce the values that our founder and our school exemplify. I am proud to be a part of a school that embraces faith and has a consistent theme in the classroom, in the community, and on the athletic fields.

Our Athletic Programs challenge our coaches and our Student-Athletes to integrate the body, mind, and spirit. It is quite obvious that athletics develops the body, but the real beauty and challenge in team building is developing the mind and spirit. We constantly encourage our student-athletes to be “men of faith.” We strive to have faith in God, in ourselves, and in our mission and incorporate that faith into our sports participation.

Faith in our religion stands as one of the cornerstones of our Basketball Program. We consistently refer to “DLS” which in our program stands for “Discipline, Love, and Sacrifice.” We often discuss the life of Jesus, who always put the needs of others ahead of Himself, and to whom we respectfully call “the greatest teammate of all time.” We constantly challenge our Student-Athletes to follow Jesus’ example, to live their lives with discipline, to exemplify love in their interactions, and to sacrifice for the good of the team and their community.

Our players are taught to embrace the concept of faith, of believing and trusting in each other. Our innovative offense, which is designed for unselfish play and precision passing, challenges them to place themselves second and to trust that each player will be where he is supposed to be and will perform for each other.

I believe it is essential to teach and reinforce these concepts each day. The motivational quote above is from one of our “attitude cards” that we give to our students before practice. These cards inspire them to think about profound and meaningful concepts. They become the catalyst for discussion and help us to develop the ideals that will be used in competition and throughout their lives. Prior to our home games, we have a chapel service that further focuses on the greater mission of sports participation. Our players enjoy sharing motivational movies, songs, poems, readings from the Bible, all intended to challenge our players to live their lives as “men of faith.” Finally, at the conclusion of each practice, we set aside time to join together, hold hands and pray.

I am convinced that the success of our program is due to the ideals that we strive to live both on and off the court. I believe that the winning we have experienced is simply the byproduct of doing things the right way, in believing and trusting in God, in ourselves, and in our mission. The true beauty of sport is when athletes understand that their role as players goes well beyond the demands of just a game. Success occurs when the players become great representatives of their families, themselves, their school and their faith.

Coach Frank Allocco is the head basketball coach at De La Salle High School in Concord, California. In addition to coaching a California State High School championship team, Coach Allocco is currently a CYO volunteer and has coached at the youth level. A graduate and athlete from the University of Notre Dame, he is in demand as an inspirational speaker.