

The Power of the Clipboard

Somebody call ESPN, this could go down as one of the greatest coaching turnarounds of all times! I'm talking about against all odds type of stuff here. Forget Hoosiers, or that other flick with the horse... Seamonkey... MonkeyBisquit... I forget.

Picture this; a young good looking young coach in his late thirties gets his first shot at the basketball big time. He borrows his daughters pink clip board and sets about to dominate the nine and ten year old girl's league.

Unfortunately however, despite displaying phenomenal coaching ability, he suffers 12 straight agonizing defeats. Somehow he manages to keep his head up, but mostly by convincing himself none of the losses were his fault.

The very next year, determined to overcome the shame, and the recommendations of most of the parents, he miraculously musters up the gumption to pick up the old pink clip board again.

This time he begins to study the league rule book. He learns how to call a time out. He ponders the deeper elements of the game, like what causes a double dribble.

With his new found wisdom, a renewed zeal, and four of the tallest girls in the league, he coaches them to an undefeated season. The fans go wild. One parent buys a round of juice boxes for everyone!

Some people might say that championship came by the sweat and the hustle of those little girls... *yeah right.*

I was thinking maybe Brad Pitt could play my part in the movie. I could show him how to do the whole time out thing.

Now wait, I know what you're thinking. Who's going to watch a movie about a 3rd and 4th grade girl's basketball coach? I thought that way too, at least until I listened to a AM radio sports show debate for twenty minutes over whether the water boy at the local Junior college should be red shirted next year. Listen, these sport fanatics will take it hook line and sinker. It'll be bigger than the paintball shootouts!

In reality, the main thing I learned is that good youth sports programs can present wonderful opportunities for coaches to encourage kids to get to know Jesus, and teach them the good sporting principles that will help shape them into the champions God created them to be. A good coach can help kids unlock what the Lord has placed in their heart. *(As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life. He has called us to receive his own glory and goodness! And by that same mighty power, he has given us all of his rich and wonderful promises. 2 Peter 1:3-4 NLT)*

God's divine power is not just for the kids that light up the scoreboard either, it's for all of them. Winning is an important goal, but it shouldn't be the only one. In fact, I had innumerable more opportunities to minister to the team that went 0-12 than I did with the league champs this year. I was equally proud of both, because leaving your best out on the court each night and keeping your attitude right always qualifies you as champs in God's eyes.

A lot of those girls will probably never play basketball again, but I hope they will take the qualities they've learned with them wherever they go. They might just discover they have a few tools in their bag the old gym scoreboard didn't quite measure.

But anyway- Rare adults who learn to keep the fame and fortune of youth sports in perspective can really make a big difference in the life of a child. I'm even thinking about buying my own clipboard next year.

-Guy Sheffield 12-22-05