

The Eagles Nest

A weekly look back and look ahead at CHS Athletics November 14, 2021

This was my recent submission to the Oregon Athletic Directors Association Monthly Newsletter

"Friendships are born on the field of athletic strife and the real gold of competition. Awards become corroded, friends gather no dust."
Jesse Owens

Two weeks ago, I ended my Saturday around 9 pm. Totally spent. Not unusual for a HS AD to hit the home front at that time of night and obviously not unusual to hit the front door of our homes, spent.

I was spent from having the opportunity to watch both of our soccer teams in the first round of OSAA playoffs, girls at Beaverton, boys at South Salem. Playoffs for teams from Centennial High School have not been easy to come by in most sports. Our schools' athletic program was captured a bit by these gifted and hard-working soccer players. Adding to the sense of exhaustion, was that both teams lost. *Friendships are born on the field of athletic strife and the real gold of competition.*

What I witnessed following both losses confirmed for me why I love to do what I get to do everyday at Centennial HS. Our teams were spent. Both coaches and players were in tears. Heads down a bit. Feeling not just the loss of the game, but for many in our two senior dominated teams, the ending of their high school soccer careers. As the realization set in, the tears increased in volume and frequency. *Awards become corroded, friends gather no dust.*

The beautiful Pacific NW fall weather surrounding us was not much comfort at that moment. The dead leaves dropping from trees and blowing around were examples of life moving on. Slowly our coaches made their way around to each player, quietly whispering words of appreciation, encouragement and thanks. *friends gather no dust*

Finally, our head boys' soccer coach, Todd Saks gathered the Eagle boys'

varsity together and with voice breaking said "I am not sure what else to say to you all, except that I love you". I have never heard a better post game, speech than that. Coach Saks, like our girl's coach Kelsey Birkhofer, had invested in the case of our senior athletes, four years or more of care, encouragement, challenge and competition. I am so grateful for the opportunity I had to witness and hear the coaches share verbally what their lives have shared by example over the many years with both of their squads.

Friends gather no dust says Jessie Owens!

This past May I was witness to another similar moment that high school sport birthed. Several of my high school basketball teammates gathered to celebrate the life of a fallen teammate, Bobby Fronk. Teammate Todd Frimoth hosted us at his home and around his fire pit. The real gold of competition showed up in Apollo purple! Teammates, former coaches and teachers, and friends gathered to celebrate our 1975 state boys' basketball championship win over Roseburg but more importantly the life of an outstanding HS, college athlete and friend Bob Fronk. *Friendships are born on the field of athletic strife and the real gold of competition*

Bob was the quarterback on two back to back state championship football

teams and the point guard, or Top Circle on the 1975 boys' basketball state title team. Four years of lettering in basketball at the University of Washington including a game winning shot at UCLA's Pauley Pavilion. Bob was a last-minute cut of the Indiana Pacers following his senior year of play. **Friends gather no dust says Jessie Owens.**

We stood together victorious at Memorial Coliseum rubbing our little state championship basketballs given to each of us as a symbol of our victory. Now some 45 years later we sat together in the backyard of a good teammate celebrating and remembering the life of Bob Fronk. Gone too soon at age 63. *Awards become corroded*

Stories, long dormant, were remembered. Summer league basketball games at Benson High School and the smell of fresh baked bread from the Franz bread factory next door on a hot summer night. Travels to Eugene OR to play a summer league tournament against Churchill High School and future Apollo coach Ken Harris. A return trip the next winter to play against the famous Danny Ainge led North Eugene Highlanders and coach Barney Holland. Tough league battles with Jesuit, Beaverton and Parkrose were discussed. Playing in Memorial Coliseum near to the height of Portland Trailblazer success. But when it was all done, we remembered the many fun and goofy moments only high school teammates can recall and rehash. **Friends truly gather no dust.** We rejoiced in our incredible coach John Wyttenberg and his impact on our lives. We have been in better touch with one another these past few years and continue to celebrate this real gold of competition.

Several of our high school teachers had made their ways to this Apollo gathering, several in their 70's and a couple in their 80's. Thanking us, the players for including them in "our"

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gathering, which would not have been the same without them there. I came home that night, emotional, grateful and fully aware of how fortunate I am to have developed such meaningful and impactful friendships with these teachers and teammates who had so freely given of themselves to me over these many years. **“Friendships, the real gold of competition”**

As I reflect upon my high school athletic experience, I realize that I was so very fortunate to have been in such a successful environment with others, focused together toward team goals. Each day of practice was a battle in the best possible sense. Phil Jackson says we work on “giving up the me for the we” when we are on a high performing team. My own selfishness was a constant hindrance to my own individual performance and love of the game during my high school years. I was not emotionally mature enough to learn the lessons I needed to, to reach the individual success I so desperately desired. Individual accolades and success came in college for me when the lessons my coaches and teachers were trying to teach me, came full circle. But sitting in that circle of friends, teammates and coaches gave me such a sense of gratitude for these long-term friends involved in my life. ***Awards become corroded, friends gather no dust***

I am so grateful to drive to Centennial High School each day to work with a coaching and teaching staff who desire to have a long lasting impactful and personal connection to our student-athletes. Would winning championship improve our feelings about what we do each day? Maybe a bit, but I would hope that we never lose track of choosing to be intentional about the long-term person to person impact that is waiting for us each day as we see our student-athletes whom we love so much.

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