

Heart of a Coach – September 2007



Name: Andy Hamilton

Title: Associate Professor of Physical Education

Sport: Head women's basketball coach, and head men's and women's tennis coach

Athletic experience: four year college football letter-winner and played one year of college tennis

Coaching experience: 22 years total, 17 years college football, 13 years college basketball (8 as an assistant) and one year each as an 8th and 10th grade coach, 12 years college tennis,

Where did you graduate from? Grinnell College

What is your chosen attribute: Enthusiasm

What is your definition of this word?

Using the human and spiritual emotions to create the best athletic performance possible.

What are some of your favorite quotes from other people about this word?

Play with emotion

Effort can blot out mistakes

Speak some good into your teammates

Favorite Biblical passage that talks about Enthusiasm:

Not completely related but – Romans 8:31-39 and specifically, v. 37 – “Now, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us.” The idea being that with God on our side we can do anything, but through enthusiasm we must give our best effort.

Why did you choose this passage, and how/why is it meaningful to you?

As a coach for over 20 years I've seen emotion and enthusiasm make huge differences in athletic performance when seemingly it could not happen. I think in those situations it is God taking over and bringing victory for the athletes who are playing for him.

Please give an application or example of this attribute (God moment) when this attribute was very real in your life:

In a basketball game two seasons ago my team was just coming off a three-point loss and hosting the two-time defending conference champion, a team we had never beaten in program history. I remember arriving to the gym feeling sorry for myself because we had just lost the night before, and I felt bad that we had to face the giants. I thought, "Heck Andy, you're coaching tonight. You're coaching basketball tonight; you have nothing to feel bad about." I vowed in my thoughts that my team needed for me to be upbeat, positive and enthusiastic that night.

Sure enough, when I encountered the team in the locker room before the game they were all down about the loss the day before. I began to impart positive thoughts. About 5 minutes into the game we had to take a time out because we were off to a slow start. I assured the women that things would come together. In about 5 more minutes I called another time out just to rest our legs, and again I assured them that we could hang with this champion. At half-time we were down 6 points and I encouraged them to hang in there..... I even quoted scripture, which was not my normal practice at our secular school. Isaiah 40:37 "They will soar on wings like eagles."

Well, we went out in the second half and took control of the game, never looking back in route to a 12-point victory. In many ways, I believe that God honored our enthusiastic attitude. The women played well, and with every passing minute they began to believe they could win against the conference champions.

How do you apply Enthusiasm with your sport and in coaching?

I try to be positive with my teams and athletes.

When/how did you become involved in FCA?

I went to our huddle when I was in HS back in the late 1970's/early 1980s. After I graduated from Grinnell I helped our men's basketball coach lead our chapter in 1987 and 88, and when he left I took over leadership of the chapter. I've also worked 10 or 11 summer camps.

Why do you think it is important to mix God and sports?

I believe we are created in God's image. There is no greater tribute – praise, honor and glory – then to use our bodies in athletics in a positive way. I know the proud feelings I have when I watch my children, William age 13 and Lily age 10, compete in sports. Since we are made in God's image, I'm guessing God has that same proud feeling when Christian athletes give their performances up to him.

Additional Comments:

It has been a thrill for me and my family to serve God at the FCA summer camp in Pella, IA. This yearly experience is always a blessing.