

The Only Thing to Fear is Fear Itself

Where is Franklin D. Roosevelt when you need him?

The only thing to fear is fear itself!

That statement says volumes to me. In dealing with the players and parents that I am working with now, that statement should be tattooed on them and I am not fond of tattoos. In fact, thinking about it, I am going to put a poster up at the training facility with that statement on it.

Negativity breeds negativity, so all it takes is one player or parent to start saying things like this: “but what if my daughter strikes out every time”, “what if we don’t win a game”, “what if my daughter gets hurt while I am not there”, “are we wasting our money by going if we don’t win”, “if we lose will she be recruited”.

I am attempting to take a team to the Canadian Open (Canada Cup) this summer and most parents and players are right with me and are raising the funds to go now. But we have a couple of parents who are asking the above questions. This is an awesome tournament that started in 1993. It is a tournament that I was fortunate enough to take the NJCAA All-Star Team to for 10 years. It is a very competitive tournament with tons of learning experiences. The players that we took up for those 10 years still talk about the tournament--what they learned and that the knowledge they brought back to their respective teams was invaluable.

If we all lived our lives asking the above questions, I can only imagine that we would all stay in our homes and little towns and live our lives like scared little mice. I have a shirt with the statement “Are you the cat or the mouse” that I wear sometimes with the team. Most of the players get it but I guess I really need to explain it to the parents.

Fear breeds fear and when any player or parent doubts and shares that doubt, it may spread to the others that may not be as mentally tough as they should be.

So, what to do about it:

- You as a coach need to be mentally tough and that is a choice that you can make.
- The team will follow your lead and especially your eyes.
- If you doubt or they see fear in your eyes, they will also doubt and be nervous.
- If you hesitate in what you want, they will hesitate also.
- If you are too negative with their type of play, they will follow that lead and be negative also.
- To be able to play at a high level, everyone must be on the same page. Coaches lead and the players and parents follow.
- Don’t allow negative talk in any sense of the word and that includes your parents. Try to convince the parents NOT to speak negatively to their kids. I know that is easier said than done, but you need to do a mental number on them also. The kids may be easier to convince than the parents and the kids need to be praised for standing on their own by being more mentally tough.
- Look at your player’s eyes, if they show fear, convince them to lose the puppy dog eyes and get the tiger eyes. If you have to show a picture of a puppy and a tiger, do it or post it where they always will see it.
- Look at the eyes of your opponents and point out to your team the fear in their eyes. This will give your players strength and focus.
- Talk about it now do not wait--make sure that they know that being mentally tough is an attitude and a choice.

- Demand focus and mental toughness in every practice, challenge them constantly, talk mental toughness a lot, NEVER be negative but be firm in what you want.

Remember that you, your team and the parents must be of one mind-one mentally tough mind. There are books galore on mental toughness but it still comes down to you and your choice to be mentally tough. No one should let fear stop them from living life to the fullness and reaching their goals.