

Athlete's Oath:

Advice to athletes, coaches and parents

Michael Muldoon - May 13, 2022

(Editor's note: To honor Michael Muldoon's incredible life — he passed away on Monday — and his 35 years here at The Eagle-Tribune we are running his favorite column today, which we've been running the last 20 years just as the schools sports season starts. Mike's message should always be heard. He would make slight adjustments some years. This was the last one he wrote, verbatim. Thank you, Mike!)

Teachers, coaches, parents, classmates and entire towns do a tremendous disservice by giving a star athlete special treatment.

True story. After playing big-time college football, the most popular, best looking kid in my high school class was living under a bridge. He had turned into a drug addict who robbed the unsuspecting, aging parents of his friends.

I always wondered if his receiving kid-glove treatment due to his athletic prowess was the reason.

Here is some advice for athletes, coaches and administrators worth keeping in mind this school year:

If the kid deserves to be failed, fail him. If he deserves to be suspended, suspend him. If he deserves to be arrested, arrest him.

If all your friends are athletes, you are shallow.

A lot of middle-aged guys who can't play ball with their kids today thought they were doing the right thing playing with pain. Listen to your body.

Pay it forward.

Kill them with kindness.

Girls, if he mistreats you, break it off immediately and never look back.

BEGINS AT HOME

The greatest gift a child can have is devoted parents. Nothing else is close.

At my last reunion, most of the pretty girls and handsome guys were no longer pretty or handsome. But the classmates who had hearts of gold, still had hearts of gold.

From the ages of 12-18, there is nothing more important than being popular. From the ages of 19-99, there is nothing less important than having been popular from ages 12-18.

Ted Williams was dead wrong. The toughest thing in sports isn't hitting a baseball. It's being a parent of an athlete. Good parents shut their mouths, stay glued to their seats and let the players play, the coaches coach and the officials officiate.

It is easier to get into an Ivy League school than to earn a full scholarship. and that's a fact.
Value tradition.

Whether you like them or not, always look out for classmates in need.

BE THE SMART KID

Don't tease the smart kid. Work to be that smart kid.

Go out of your way to befriend the fat kid, the kid with the acne problem or the kid with the troubled home life.

Make sure you show the same respect to your high school coach as you do to your club team coach.

No matter how unsatisfying the season may have been for you, never skip the team banquet. That's the ultimate slap in the face to your teammates and coaches.

Your coach doesn't have it in for you. Repeat, your coach doesn't have it in for you.

Always give a kid a second chance.

Be a multi-sport athlete. You think that 155th AAU game of the year is making you a better player? The number of athletes who do one sport year-round who blow out their knees or quit from burnout is frightening. Ask any college coach — they prefer multi-sport athletes.

CLASS AND GRACE

Class and grace never go out of style.

When you're 90, it will still eat you up inside that you bullied that classmate as a teenager. There's a special place in heaven for the classmate who sticks up for the bullied peer.

Man, nothing is going to be sweeter than proving those critics wrong.

Being a captain is an honor not a right. If you aren't chosen, don't pout, moan, whine, hold your breath or try to get the coach fired. Parents, same goes for you.

Better to have three true friends than 3,003 Facebook friends.

The perpetually offended will suck the joy out of any room.

A suggestion, before every school year, read "The Ugly Duckling."

Good teachers keep their politics out of the classroom. Good schools demand it.

Coaches Award winners tend to be more successful in life than team MVPs.

Humility is a virtue. False humility makes you a bore.

ONLY YOUNG ONCE

You have the rest of your life to get a job.

Future employers may not be a big fan of that cool tattoo you got in high school. Think before you ink.

If a coach positively affected your life, write him/her a thank you note. You'll have a friend for life.

Don't use the n-word, regardless of your race.

Never be ashamed for being poor. Never be ashamed for being rich.

Any coach or athletic director who drones on about "kids nowadays" should get out of the business.

Any coach who swears too much is a lousy coach and an even worse role model.

The undersized benchwarmer who doesn't miss practice in four years should be more admired than the All-State quarterback who can barely fit his head in his helmet.

Thinking about spending too much for the prom? Cap it at \$500 and give the rest to the Jimmy Fund. You'll feel so good.

DO RIGHT THINGS

Do the right things now, reap the benefits for the next 70 years.

You'll never regret having said no to alcohol, drugs and sex in high school.

The pain you can inflict with social media is immeasurable. Don't hit send if you are in a bad mood, had too good of a time at a party or have a voice in the back of your head saying this might not be such a good idea.

If your coach instructs you to cheapshot an opponent, quit the team immediately.

Treat the team manager with the same respect as the star of the team.

A coach who makes fun of a boy's weight is a boor. A coach who makes fun of a girl's weight is dangerous.

Few things are more true than you reap what you sow.

HEART OVER BICEPS

The size of your nose, biceps or breasts is inconsequential to anybody who truly cares about you.

The size of your heart is all that matters.

Any coach/athletic director who voluntarily hosts invitational events is a gem.

Any athletic director who doesn't have rosters for the fans for state tourney games isn't doing his job.

Administrators must stand up to meddlesome parents or it will be a slippery slide to chaos.

Play for the love of the game and only the love of the game.

You're not going to make the pros. Our 20-school region sends about one baseball player and one football player to the pros every 10 years. We've produced two NBA players in 70 years. You have a far better chance of becoming a brain surgeon.

SHOCK THE WORLD

A good captain will lead his team to a state title. A great one will take a stand against hazing.

It's never too late to change.

Look around your homeroom. Take a look at your teammates at practice. Now, finally, look in the mirror.

You've likely just witnessed several people whose lives will be ruined by drugs. Be smart.

A real athlete never misses a game or a practice for a dance, a concert or Senior Skip Day.

A loss should hurt like hell. Getting thrown out of a game should hurt even more.

Steroids make you a bigger athlete and a smaller person.

You're worth it.

Always feed the benchwarmer the ball at the end of a blowout.

Don't listen to the coach who cut you. Work like the dickens and shock the world next year.

Let the games begin.

This column is Eagle-Tribune sportswriter Michael Muldoon's annual message to high school athletes, their parents and coaches. It has run every year since 2001.