Among Friends

Our Community Query: Imagine a world where everyone cooperates? What does that look like?
– Lower School TASQUE (Teachers And Students for Quaker Understanding and Education)

Friends Academy Monthly E-Letter | March 2019 >> www.fa.org

ATHLETICS COVER STORY

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

How playing a sport teaches more than teamwork – Page 3

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Recently, a Friends Academy parent asked me what he should say if a friend inquired as to why he should send his student-athlete to Friends Academy.

In this month’s issue of Among Friends, Athletic Director Alan Quackenbush shows how “The Why” of Athletics at Friends Academy profoundly impacts students far beyond their time as an athlete at FA, and why our unique athletic experience at Friends differs from other schools.

Our athletics philosophy and program are rooted in the belief that every student benefits from a holistic education that must include athletics – team sports are a requirement of the 7th and 8th grade programs.

At Friends Academy, we are not driving sport just for sport’s sake; our mission holds us to ensure that through this pursuit we meet the larger goal of the development of our students’ spirit; teaching and instilling persistence, character, accountability, and a fierce commitment to achieve the highest levels of sportsmanship.

As the only independent school in the Section 8 public school league, we remain committed to competing in the toughest arena because we know it provides our athletes with the highest level of competition across Nassau County. Enormously proud of our wins, our titles, and our involvement in state championship games, we are prouder still of the 20+ sportsmanship awards our teams have received in recent years.

Our adherence to our Quaker values trumps all

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and at a time when integrity in athletics is on the decline, it matters all the more. That’s why any family would want to send their student-athlete to Friends Academy.

Recently, Will Sands ’14 addressed the Upper School student body at its Winter Sports Assembly. An All-American several times over, highly accomplished collegiate athlete at Bucknell and a rookie All-Star for the Boston Cannons, a professional Major Lacrosse League, Will affirmed that the relationships he cemented on the fields and court at Friends Academy will forever define his career. “Sports gives you the chance to fall – and then get up,” he said.

As a three-season athlete in soccer, basketball and lacrosse, it was Will’s involvement in his non-dominant sports that taught him the most and pushed him the furthest and at Friends Academy, he was able to participate in all three – rounding out his athletic experience. Will explained, “Not only does playing multiple sports improve your skill set, but it gives you another chance to learn from different coaches and players.”

Will reminded Upper Schoolers, “Being able to put on the FA uniform was a privilege. It wasn’t a right and I am beyond thankful for the opportunity that was given to me. Some might say my teammates and I took high school athletics too seriously. But, listen and learn from someone who has been in your shoes... It allowed me to learn things that I would have never learned in the classroom.”
“Why play a sport?”

From accountability to fitness to trustworthiness – and everything in between

By Alan Quackenbush
Director of Athletics
It’s a question I hear often. For any student, participation on a team may catch a college admission counselor’s eye and give an indication that a student’s education involves more than just their work in the classroom. For the highly competitive athlete, it definitely increases the possibility of receiving a college scholarship, as well as the chance to play a sport at the college level – an experience no athlete ever forgets.

However, I also hear this refrain: “My child will never get a college scholarship, so why bother?”

“My child is never going to play professional sports…."

“Playing a sport takes too much time… I could use that time studying…”

The reality is that approximately 2% of high school athletes will receive a college scholarship to play a sport, and fewer than that will ever play at the professional level, so indeed, “why bother?”…

Ultimately, participation on a team and playing a sport goes beyond the goal of securing a college scholarship and the virtues go deeper than an entry on a college resume. The lessons learned, the skills that are developed, and the character traits that are nur-
tured, will allow an individual to be a more effective workforce and community leader, a better person, and will better prepare she/he for a much larger contest… a contest where you don’t get to “substitute,” or take “time outs.” Athletics presents a daily opportunity for young people to develop an appreciation for character traits and values that will help them to be successful throughout their lifetime.

**An appreciation for a work ethic**

To be successful in any sport requires both daily practice and the persistence to apply a level of effort that provides for progress, albeit slow, which frequently may result in failure along the way. For some individuals, getting through a week of practices, let alone an entire season, may be one of their biggest challenges – not easy, but requires a persistent effort. This concept of work ethic is embodied in Aristotle’s quote: “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”

Edwin J. Dellatre, Professor of Philosophy at Boston University I feel, said it best: “The lessons are straightforward: There is no path to excellence at anything except the deliberate, purposeful formation of daily habits that make the specific form of excellence possible. There are no shortcuts, and mere talent is not enough.”

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Preparation in pursuit of a common goal

Along with a work ethic comes the need for preparation, purposeful practice, and the idea that while setting a goal is worthy, attaining that goal requires a plan and the execution of daily habits that encompass much more time than the actualization. “If it takes six hours to chop down a tree, spend four hours sharpening the axe.” In the lobby of the Athletic Center, every competitor and athlete is reminded of this concept through the quote on the wall spoken by world champion marathoner Ijuma Ikangaa: “The will to win means nothing without the will to prepare.”

Responsibility to teammates

When you participate on a team, there is a collective effort among all toward a common goal. The “whole is greater than the sum of its parts,” but only if all the parts are in place – and on a regular basis. The loss of a “part” (the absence of a team member from practice, from a meeting, or a team member not being “present in the moment” at a practice or game) doesn’t just impact the individual, but diminishes the whole.

Cooperation

Every member of a team takes on a role but those parts require an individual to give up a portion of their
individuality and put the needs of the group first. This requires collaboration and cooperation on the part of all team members for the greater good. All the oars have to be in the water, and they all have to be pulling in the same direction, together.

**Respect for an opponent**

Practices with teammates, team meetings, and preparing for a contest are all part of the daily “class work” that is required to lay the groundwork for success. The “tests” are the contests that take place against an opponent. Without an opponent to compete against – one who has taken the same road in their preparation and strives to compete at their highest ability – you can never be pushed to be your own excellent self. If an athlete respects the process and virtues of sport, then they must respect their opponent for pursuing the same goal… “your opponent is you… he’s just wearing a different jersey.”

**Trustworthiness and fair play**

All sports contain a system of rules that must be followed and it is the obligation and responsibility of those playing to observe and follow the rules. This includes even the times when the officials are not looking or don’t see everything. It’s been said that “sport doesn’t build character, it reveals it.” Can I rely on my teammates and trust that they will operate within the same code that everyone else is required to, in order to give the team the best chance at success?

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Accountability & Commitment

A pledge… a promise… an obligation… when you join a team or play a sport you pledge to attend practices, meetings, games, give your best effort, and work with your coaches and teammates from the first practice to the last, whether it’s easy or hard, and whether it’s convenient or requires some sacrifice. You are held accountable by your teammates and to a greater extent by the results of your collective efforts. How many other times in your lifetime will you be asked to commit to a greater good or be held accountable for your efforts?

Loyalty

In good times, through difficult ones, and in instances when the larger consensus may not be popular, will you be faithful to your team and teammates, to the common goal, and will you help them when they need help… will they help you?… And will you do the right thing?

Humility in victory; grace in defeat

In sport, you have the opportunity to experience success, providing you put in the work, effort, preparation, and commitment. However, despite that process, there will be many other times (maybe more) when you will fail. How you handle your failures AND your successes will define you
as a person. You learn that the pursuit of excellence becomes hollow if you gloat about it; your losses or failures give you an opportunity to grow and become better. And through those losses, you come to appreciate and value your successes in a more fulfilling way. You develop a resilience that is hard to develop anywhere else.

“I’ve missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot... and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. That is why I succeed.” – Michael Jordan

**Health & Wellness**

Athletics is an extension of physical education. The concept of using physical activity as a vehicle to create a hedge against disease and to fulfill the mental, social, emotional, spiritual and physical development of an individual extends to an individual’s involvement in sport. You learn that you can’t be your best self and teammate...
without adhering to the habits that keep you physically healthy through consistent training, proper nutrition and adequate restoration through sleep and mindful practice.

Learning emotional control and focus that is required, not only when the score is tied with seconds left with a “game-deciding” shot looming, but also when life throws its worst at you and you’re required to respond in the best possible way.

Frank Bruni, OpEd writer for the New York Times recently wrote about the interplay between the mental and physical aspects of sport. He concluded with this statement:

"Athleticism is the synergy of the mental and the physical. Its brawn refracted and refined through advance plotting and instantaneous decision-making. There's no untangling thought from motion, and training them to work in tandem is what makes a great competitor — and a better life."

In Ancient Greece, it was understood that sport was the marriage of intellectual, physical and ethical education and that athletics provided the platform to teach virtues and values of a healthy society.

Many of these qualities are attributes that employers look for in potential hires today and are what make those who participated in athletics, more likely to be seen as a successful and attractive recruit for their companies. The ability to see projects through to completion, self-motivate, and collaboration are just a few skills learned through athletics.

**Extension of Quaker education**

As an instrument of furthering the mission of the school, athletics dovetails naturally with the Quaker values of integrity, community, equity and inclusion.

Despite the differences that can exist in our society among diverse populations and the challenges that arise, those barriers and differences fall away once you step on the court or on the field. In fact, sport can be viewed as one of the most inclusive institutions of our society. Bill Curry, former football coach and two-time Super Bowl champion refers to it as the “miracle of the huddle.” While he uses football as the metaphor, it is true of all sports… it can be one of the few places where athletes and teammates of different races, religions, ethnicity and political viewpoints can come together in pursuit of a common goal.

This team culture leads to the microcosm of a community that works in concert towards a larger goal and a greater good both on and off the field. In turn, these teams and sport act as a rallying point and unifying vehicle for the larger community.

Recently some of our student-athletes submitted essays to the Friends...
Council on Education that looked at the role competition plays in conjunction with Quaker values and lessons that are learned. They wrote eloquently about how their participation in sport has crystalized their view of integrity and community... how they learn that integrity means honoring the game, honoring their opponents and teammates and doing the right thing despite it being hard or unpopular to do so, and even when no one is looking. And they wrote about the commonality that competition and sport provide... teammates working together, with the same name on their jerseys, wearing the same colors, sharing the same work experiences, striving to be excellent in a common goal...” and developing relationships that last a lifetime.

If some of these concepts seem familiar, it may be because you have already become acquainted with some of them yourself in the course of your life experiences and understand the role they play in your career, family, community, and role as a citizen.

But they can’t be measured by a test, a quiz, or a term paper...the “assessment” takes place over a period of years after athletic careers are finished and is ultimately defined by the type of people our student-athletes become.

Joe Ehrmann, former player for the Baltimore Colts and author of Inside-Out Coaching explains what it means to be a member of a team:

“...a team is defined by the quality of its relationships and the commitment to its cause. Every team has a common purpose, performance goals, and objectives...every team has a mutually accountable work ethic and is built on the trust, respect and integrity of every team member. It is the perfect venue to help boys and girls become men and women.”

“Why should I participate in a sport?... What is the value?”... In the larger picture of developing life-long skills and virtues, in developing resilience and becoming a person of greater character, it might be the best, most relevant, classroom you ever attend.
## Get CONNECTED

### Parent Council – “Get Connected”

**March 2019**

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<tr>
<td>Thursday, March 14</td>
<td>• Quaker Singers (Dolan Center, 7:30 am)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, March 16</td>
<td>• 8th Annual Brian Hom Memorial 5K Walk/Run (8:30 am – Registration, Main Gym; 9 am – Walk/run begins, Track)</td>
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<td>Tuesday, March 19</td>
<td>• Breakfast with Teacher John, “Civil Discourse Begins at Home: How to Have Healthy Family Conversations Around Difficult Topics” (8:15 am, Frost Hall Conference Room)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, March 21</td>
<td>• Quaker Singers (Dolan Center, 7:30 am) • Middle School History Night (MS Classrooms, 6-8 pm)</td>
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<td>Friday, March 22</td>
<td>• Quaker Practice &amp; Wellness Parent Meeting (QPCE Conference Room – ground floor of Frost Hall, 8:15 am) • The Caring Community Dinner &amp; Original Works20 (Program starts in the Theater, 6:30-9 pm)</td>
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<td>Saturday, March 23</td>
<td>• Summer Camps Open House (11 am-1 pm)</td>
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<td>Tuesday, March 26</td>
<td>• Middle/Upper School Math Pathways for Parents in Grades 5-8 (MS, 8:15 am)</td>
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<td>Thursday, March 28</td>
<td>• Quaker Singers (Dolan Center, 7:30 am)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, March 29</td>
<td>• FA Balance &amp; Well-Being Summit (KW Library, 8:30 am-2:30 pm)</td>
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