

Whether you are just starting your career or on your way to the high school gridiron, each new season generates an abundance of new Cardinal football memories. We all have our favorites – I am sure - but the one that seems to really stand out is “**PRIDE**” done at the end of each preseason practice.

“**PRIDE**” can mean different things depending on your perspective and whose shoes you happen to be standing in at the time.

If I were a Cardinal student-athlete, PRIDE would be a reminder that I need to participate with **passion**. Being passionate about your endeavors – no matter what you choose to do – will help create opportunities for you to succeed. As a student-athlete, “**PRIDE**” would also be a reminder that **respect** is something that should always be given to others but earned for yourself. Coaches, parents, teammates, opponents, your community and even the game itself all need your respect. You need to expend your own effort, display your commitment and maintain your character to earn respect from that very same group.

As you go about earning respect for yourself, you need to make the choices that will show the world the caliber of your character. **Integrity** – doing what you say you are going to do no matter what – would also be an important part of a student-athlete’s view of “**PRIDE**”. **Discipline** – having the “want to” to carry things through, staying with it, no matter how difficult – is a close cousin to integrity. In addition, you can never forget the catalyst for all things you want to achieve: effort. You have to work hard for what you want - mentally, physically and emotionally.

If I were a coach, “**PRIDE**” would remind me that I have a **paternal** responsibility to share my abilities and talents beyond my own children. I also need to recognize that my words and deeds will be broadcast over a much wider area. The impression I cast on each individual may last a lifetime. As a coach, I too am bound by the universal rules of **respect**, with the keen understanding that wearing a whistle does not grant me a pass on earning my share. **Integrity** is crucial in coaching. Your charges are well aware of what is fair and what is not. There will be a day of reckoning when they tally up the score.

Discipline is an important component in building a team. Everyone on the team – players, coaches and parents – must understand that no one is bigger or more important than the whole. As a coach, the level of your **effort** and commitment to the team is proportional to the effort and commitment you get back from your players. If you lead the way in word and in action – they will follow.

If I were a parent - one, who has seen my son on the sidelines, pulled out of the game and wondered “why” - the first letter in “**PRIDE**” stands for **patience**. Coaches need parents to be patient so that the lessons they are teaching can take root and grow. No football player ever went from youth football to the NFL in one, two or even four seasons. It is a process. A very long process - measured in inches - not yards. It is not uncommon for there to be great strides forward followed by several disheartening steps backwards. Patience – and faith - is needed in great doses.

As a parent of a youth football player, I too need to adhere to the rules of **respect**. Respect the coaches and the other players - do not dissect and dismantle them in front of the kids. Respect the game – be enthusiastic about the event and other’s successes on Saturday but never let your own pride make it all about yourself at the expense of others.

While no one can dispute the importance of integrity as a parent, I think in this case, the “I” in **PRIDE** carries more meaning in terms of **investment**. Not just in terms of the registration fee, shoes and such, but a true investment on a personal level to learn how to help your player grow and improve. Nothing improves this process and shortens the curve like a parent’s time. There will be disappointment and maybe even despair when it comes to this undertaking. This is one of those situations where only the wisdom of a parent can help explain the bigger picture to a young student-athlete. The **discipline** a parent can help to instill at this time is truly indispensable. This goes hand in hand with having the patience – and “want to” – to stick to it, no matter what.

As a fellow parent, I recognize the effort it takes to raise kids – that is understood. Therefore, I guess to me, “E” would have to be **enthusiasm**. Be passionate about your player’s participation and support him and the team with all your energy - but leave it at that. Our days on the gridiron are long gone. It is his turn now and he needs to be able to fail and succeed on his own terms – not in comparison to your athletic deeds. Sons and daughters are always measuring themselves to affirm what they think we want them to be. Don’t make your shadow any bigger than it already is.

Student-athlete, coach or parents all have an important role in Cardinal **PRIDE**. Participate with passion - guided by respect. Do what you say you are going to do – and stick with it - even though your goals are not readily achieved. And work at it, since effort not only gets you what you want in the end, but also makes you a better person in the process.