

5-5-2008 Inspirational Student-Athletes

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2 JOSH CENTOR: Good morning. And welcome to "Mondays  
3 With Myles".

4 Dr. Brand, every once in a while we get to have a lot  
5 of fun here. And today we are going to talk about some really  
6 good news that's happening in intercollegiate athletics.

7 Last week, an outfielder from Western Oregon, Sara  
8 Tucholsky, she hit her first career home run. She was so  
9 excited, she skips past first base. She returns to touch the  
10 base and she tears her ACL. If somebody on our team touches  
11 her, she's out. They were going to pitch run for her, but  
12 then it's just a single.

13 So the story has been told a hundred times now. A  
14 player from Central Washington, Mallory Holtman, came and  
15 carried her around the bases in an amazing, awesome display of  
16 sportsmanship. This is a really good story.

17 DR. MYLES BRAND: It really is a good story. I've  
18 seen it in the print media, as well, Josh. You know, it is a  
19 feel good story, but it's not unique in the sense that  
20 student-athletes are always above and beyond. They are at the  
21 inspirational level.

22 This is a particularly poignant example of it. But  
23 there is so many instances of student-athletes and athletics  
24 generally reaching out at an inspirational level and  
25 understanding who they participate against, as well as who

1 their teammates are. Just an amazing story.

2 JOSH CENTOR: Why do you think so many people have  
3 been touched by this? We are not just talking about sports  
4 fans. I woke up one morning and saw the story on CNN's  
5 Morning News program.

6 Why are so many people affected by this?

7 DR. MYLES BRAND: Here, I think, is one potential  
8 explanation. This story, and others like them, are contrary  
9 to what we keep hearing in other sports venues in which  
10 winning isn't the most important thing -- it's the only thing.  
11 The only thing that counts is winning. Winning at any cost.  
12 If you're not cheating, you're not trying hard enough.

13 We hear that time and again in the sports venues. Our  
14 culture has gotten so that it is the competition and the  
15 winning is the only thing that counts.

16 And I think, deep down, many people are uncomfortable  
17 with that. I mean, they understand why at high stakes, in  
18 professional sports when a lot of money is involved, why  
19 people might say or do those things. But I think deep down we  
20 are uncomfortable with it.

21 And when you see instances like this at Western  
22 Oregon, and others like it, it helps to remind us that really  
23 winning isn't everything. It is about character; it's about  
24 others who you participate with. That's -- we resonate that  
25 because I think our culture has moved so much in the other

1 direction, we want to pull it back a little bit.

2 JOSH CENTOR: We have gotten some comments on the  
3 DoubleAZone about this story. And one commenter posed that he  
4 couldn't imagine this happening in a men's sport. And I  
5 wanted to get your take on his take.

6 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, that's an interesting comment.  
7 It might be that in men's competition that culture I spoke  
8 about a minute ago is more prevalent. But I'm not so sure  
9 that that's right.

10 I can imagine it happening. Maybe not imagining it  
11 happening in the highest level competition. It's very hard to  
12 imagine it happening at the professional leagues when it  
13 really is a livelihood that's at stake. But I think it could  
14 happen in men's sports as well. And there probably are cases  
15 like this, maybe not as dramatic, that haven't received a lot  
16 of publicity -- good cases like this, as well.

17 I would say it's a reaction too, and a revolt against,  
18 really, that a cultural perspective, that all that really  
19 counts is winning. It's not true. Other things count too.

20 JOSH CENTOR: Now, the story that we have spoken about  
21 with Western Oregon, that's the one that's really hitting the  
22 news right now. But I don't want to let go another couple of  
23 really positive stories and inspirational stories, if you  
24 will, that have been out there.

25 The Boston Globe ran a piece last week about a

1 sophomore catcher named Gina Gilday from Elms College out in  
2 Massachusetts. Gina doesn't have any legs, yet she is a  
3 really integral part of the Elms Softball program.

4 A wrestler from Cornell was in a life-threatening car  
5 accident, walked away, went through the battery of tests. And  
6 even though he was okay with the car accident, realized that  
7 he actually had some cancerous tumors, and he started a  
8 blog -- an extremely popular blog with 10s and 10s and 10s of  
9 thousand of hits -- people following his every move because  
10 they care.

11 What is it about these student-athletes that have  
12 attracted so many people to these stories?

13 DR. MYLES BRAND: Again, I want to go back to the  
14 point that it is contrary to that cultural tendency we are  
15 seeing now winning at any cost, that that's all that matters.  
16 No, that's not all that matters.

17 And we want to, I think, focus a bit as people, on  
18 these human stories about the well being of student-athletes  
19 and how they care about each other, how they are really very  
20 special people.

21 Athletics really brings out the best in people  
22 sometimes. You are under stress in athletics. As you know,  
23 you've participated. But if you have a very strong character,  
24 and you are looking at the bigger picture about life, I think  
25 these stories help us understand that and put sports in

1 context. And that's why we are resonating to them. We are  
2 really not, deep down, all of us at least, happy with these  
3 cultural trends we see.

4 JOSH CENTOR: Well, all I know is that I was inspired  
5 last week. And I felt really good about the things that I was  
6 hearing. So intercollegiate athletics is really a special  
7 place to be.

8 DR. MYLES BRAND: It really is. And I was inspired by  
9 those stories too, and especially, the helping the young woman  
10 across the bases. That was just an amazing story. Good to  
11 speak with you today, Josh.

12 JOSH CENTOR: Thank you, Dr. Brand.

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