

Character Beats Talent

By Nicolae Popescue

Athletes live in a world where privacy doesn't exist. Nothing really seems private anymore. The role social media has had on the college recruiting and scouting has forever changed the way players and coaches find each other and interact. Our attitude, actions and behaviors define our character, which ultimately shows who we are as individuals.



It takes a long time to build your reputation and it can only take a few minutes to ruin it. Players at all levels need to be aware that they are watched at all times. No matter how talented a player is, if they don't have a character that keeps them grounded and pushes them to work hard at all times, then nothing else matters. It's like the old saying where hard work beats talent if talent doesn't work hard.

I do believe that one of the worse things in life for an athlete or individual is wasted talent. Many players may have the talent but very few have a true character. So in the end, it's like you are wasting all the potential you got which is ultimately wasted talent.

Some players also think they are above the team which shows the narcissistic mentality they possess. A player who has the "team first" mentality will always go further because s/he knows that without their teammates, they won't go far. They may develop fast and make a name for themselves but without the team behind they can't go far. Even for the most talented athletes it takes a lot of character to recognize that.

Character is who you are and it defines you not only as an athlete but also most importantly as a person. Your facial expression, body language, reactions, and how you interact with others will show what kind of character you are made of. College coaches can quickly pick up on that so be treated everyone with respect no matter the situation. Always treat people the way you would want to be treated. It's that simple.

A college coach will always choose a player who has character over a player who's got talent and a bad character. You may ask: Are you sure? For the sake of the team and program, a coach doesn't want a bad apple in their team.

A player with character and less talent will understand the importance of hard work and what it really takes to be fully determined. A talented player doesn't always have to work hard to show what they've got. Those players can easily showcase their ability on the field and can sometimes help change the outcome of a game. But remember that the

higher the level of competition, the harder is to change the outcome of a game based on a player's talent alone. You still need your teammates to help you perform at your best.

College coaches would rather have a player who's less talented but has a great character and understands the values it takes to be a champion. Those players are very coachable and they learn quickly which allows them to grow, perform well, and gain everyone's respect. It's very rare that a player has talent and character, which kind of makes them the total package.

When players at the college or pro level are in the spotlight, the media starts to pick on anything and at times criticize. Players with character often show class and maturity in their answers even when they feel like they are entreated unfairly. Now, players who are talented and have no character can also come out as arrogant, careless or aggressive. Now, not everyone acts or behaves in the same way. But when talking with athletes who value their character and care about how those around them perceive them, you can easily see a difference in attitude.

Your talent can accelerate your exposure but your character will show how far you will go.

Players are constantly surrounded by difficult situations on and off the field. It takes courage, grace and strength of character to push thru and survive all the difficult moments. Talent will only get a player so far, especially at the younger ages when the main focus should be on development and not on the most athletic kid. Character can take a player to a whole new level as long as they stay grounded and hustle for every opportunity they get.

When an athlete is talented, s/he will attract the college coaches and get on their radar. Once the coach gets to know the player in person, they will soon be able to identify what kind of character they have. Often times, this is a deal breaker in the recruiting process.

When a college coach identifies an athlete who is talented and has great character, then most likely they will show lots of interest in that particular student-athlete. Your experiences can often impact your character and the way you see, perceive and react towards those around you.

Based on my own experiences, I have to admit that the players with character shaped by values and respect have always went further than those who had talent and unfortunately a poised character. Players, please remember what college coaches look for when they try to meet with you. They can easily like you or forget all about you once you reveal your true character. And trust me, they want to see you lose a game or two just so they can see how you deal with disappointment, treat those around you and they way you react. When players are under pressure or feel empowered, they often reveal their true character.