

What Happens Off the Field



Patrick Moffitt December 15, 2017

At St. Andrew's, I have discovered a whole new dimension of coaching and working with kids. I originally decided to pursue coaching because of the experiences I had growing up as an athlete. For one thing, I believe that all the challenges and adversity I experienced through athletics are what molded me into the person I am today. Another reason—the main reason—I decided to become a coach was because of the relationship I developed with one particular coach during my time as a college athlete. I wanted to be that kind of role model to someone else: a coach who could change kids' lives through teaching the sport I love—football. A third motivating factor was all the time I spent my first year out of college, sitting on the couch every weekend watching football and wishing I was back out on the field, lining up with my teammates and preparing to achieve all the goals we had set for ourselves.

As an athlete, I was always able to form meaningful and lasting relationships with my teammates and coaches. But St. Andrew's brings that experience to a whole new level. Our 100% residential campus means that we—coaches, faculty, staff—are always around our students. For me, the toughest thing about coaching is to let go of whatever just happened on the field. After a game or a practice, I go over and over in my head

what we could have done, or should have done, differently. In my experiences prior to St. Andrew's—whether coaching football at a college or playing football at a huge public high school—everyone would more or less go their separate ways after practices and games. We often would not see each other until the next team meeting or practice. But at St. Andrew's, I quickly realized that I would see my players in the Dining Hall, on dorm, or just simply while walking from place to place on campus. Win or lose, good practice or bad, I'd always be visible and available to the players.

Anyone who has played football for me over the past three years will tell you that I am tough. I expect a lot out of my players, and I regularly remind them that they may not like me all of the time. I try to get everything out of them that I can, and I try to provide them with the tools they need to be the best football player they can possibly be. I am also competitive to the point that I expect to win every game we show up for, no matter who the opponent may be. (Although maybe all coaches feel this way.) Here's what makes St. Andrew's special: even though I demand a lot out of our athletes on the field, being around them all the time *off the field* allow us to develop a different kind of human connection. Off the field, my players know that I am here and willing to talk to them about anything, not just football. No matter how the practice or game went, once we walk off the field, I need to switch right back into my other roles of educator, advisor, and all the other hats we wear as faculty members of a fully residential boarding school. I have learned that, after a tough game, something as simple as sitting down during walk-around duty on a Saturday night and talking to one of my players about something completely unrelated to the game can really make a difference to him. This means that students see me as more than a coach, too—I am the dorm faculty encouraging kids to make their beds; I am the guy driving the van to community service; I am the advisor taking my advisees out to Buffalo Wild Wings to, yes, watch football.

Probably one of the most cliché sayings in all of sports is: "It's about more than just wins and losses." But, since I began coaching at St. Andrew's in 2015, I have realized that some of the most meaningful moments between a player and coach occur far removed from any field or court, and they occur after both wins and losses. For me, coaching is inherently fun, and my ultimate goal is to win the game every time we line up to kick off, but the unique environment of St. Andrew's has really opened my eyes to the power of athletics within community. The character education and mentorship that is inherent to athletics is amplified at St. Andrew's, where we are all part of the same community, 24 hours a day, and where, as a coach, my direct impact on the players and students takes place off the field just as much as it does on the field. I think at St. Andrew's, the kids know that we, as coaches, do truly care about them as people, not just as competitors.