

THE BENEFITS OF SPORT IN LIFE

By Tony Green

INTRO-

First of all I'd like to say what a pleasure and honour it is to be invited here today to speak to you, the young students of the Hervey Bay and surrounding districts on the benefits of sport in your lives and to recognise and celebrate your personal athletic achievements.

We are very lucky to be born in a country that not only allows us, but actively encourages us to make sport such a major part of our lives. Through our involvement in sport we can enjoy an exciting, fulfilling and healthful lifestyle that can bring us many friends, happy memories and opportunities that would otherwise not have been experienced.

I personally can speak of the many rewards and experiences that sport has brought to my life. I've experienced the happiness, the success, the sadness and failure which one day all comes together in giving you a lifetime of memories and lessons that will help develop your character and influence your life decisions and directions as a person for years to come.

As many of you now move on towards high school you will be confronted with many new challenges, new interests and new fears. I urge you all to continue your involvement in sport as I believe that it contributes to helping you grow as a person and achieve in other areas of your life, such as developing your self confidence, focusing on your education and relief from the pressures of everyday life.

Something that I have always encouraged is for young talented sports people like yourselves to put the same dedication and commitment into your education as you do into your sport. Many school aged athletes including myself placed their sporting goals ahead of their education which in the long term can make it more difficult for you to pursue your sporting goals. You may be thinking how can a good education help make you a more successful as a sports person? With a good education will come a wider variety of employment opportunities and make it more likely that you will be able to choose employment which allows you the time and money to pursue your sporting dreams. Furthering your education to Senior High School and University in your later school years will also present you with more opportunity to continue your training and make representative teams in your chosen sports at a student level. A good education in the long term may even allow you to be employed in a workplace that compliments your sporting interests. You may have also noticed how many retired athletes who also worked hard towards a good education have gone on to be very successful in their business pursuits after retirement.

GOAL SETTING-

One of the most important factors in working towards achieving your sporting dreams is goal setting. Goal setting helps you choose where you want to go and what you want to achieve in your life. By knowing what you want to achieve you can work out where you will need to concentrate your efforts. Properly set goals are also very motivating. As you get into the habit of setting and achieving them you will feel your self confidence building. Goal setting in sport helps you organise your time and directs your focus so that you get the best out of your training efforts. You may ask “How do I set goals?” First decide what you want to achieve. Second break it down into smaller more achievable targets that you will need to achieve in order to step closer to your ultimate goals. Once you have your plan it is up to you to work towards achieving it.

I am sure in this room here today we have a mixture of talented young people. Some naturally gifted and the vast majority that have to work extra hard to achieve their goals. There are some sitting here today that will represent their country, some their state, some their district and some may never reach more than a local club level. Your level of achievement or whether you reach your ultimate goal is not necessarily the most important factor in the pursuit of your dreams and certainly does not represent ultimate success or failure. This is where the setting of short term goals is very important because as you achieve your short term goals you are already building on your life achievements and you can take pride in reaching them as you strive forward towards larger goals which may otherwise have seemed too distant and unachievable.

The one thing that will remain the same for all of you, no matter what level of sporting success you achieve is the joy and memories that participating in sport will bring to your lives and remain with you forever.

My background-

Whilst not achieving greatness in any one particular sport, nor been blessed as a naturally gifted athlete I have still managed to compete at the top level in a variety of sports. I put 110% effort from the age of 8 into attaining my dream of playing Rugby League for my country. Although never reaching this ultimate goal it took me on a journey that saw me part of numerous Junior Premiership winning Teams, 2 A Grade Premiership Winning teams, many Representative sides and part of a Broncos Recruitment Squad in Brisbane. Being part of these teams saw me travel throughout most towns in Queensland. Although falling short of my ultimate goal of representing my country the experiences, friendships and memories I made through rugby league have been invaluable.

At the age of 23 I retired from Rugby League and announced that I was going to take up competitive bodybuilding. One of my team mates said to me, “what

do you want to leave football for to do something you'll never be any good at?" I could have let that comment dishearten me but I added this to the many other negatives from people that I have always used as part of my motivation to succeed. I took the same determination and lessons learnt on achieving goals when I left football to pursue my bodybuilding. The first year of bodybuilding I set a goal to win a novice Title. I won two that year. The following year my next goal was to win a state Title. I didn't achieve this short term goal but placed 3rd. Whilst not achieving my goal I had progressed a step further towards my ultimate goal of winning a National Title. I looked at what I needed to improve and made a plan in my training to try to attain this title. I took a year off competing and made the necessary adjustments in my training and on my return to competition I won the State Title which I continued to win until achieving my ultimate bodybuilding goal 3 years later in winning the Overall Australian Title. This achievement saw me flown around the Country and to Greece to compete in the World Championships exceeding my dreams, placing 8th in the World and experiencing many wonderful things that without sport I would have been unlikely to have ever done.

Again when I retired from competitive bodybuilding I used the same goal setting techniques and dedication to help me progress in professional Mixed Martial Arts fighting and ultimately fight for a National Light Heavyweight Title. Although losing the fight and retiring from professional fighting, these achievements have allowed me to continue my involvement in the sport through training and managing young athletes. Watching and helping young people with the same passion and drive to strive towards their sporting dreams gives me as much if not more reward than my own achievements. Through my years of experiences, lessons and commitment in pursuing my goals in sport I am continuing to enjoy sport as a trainer and a manager, travelling regularly interstate and visiting other countries whilst encouraging and assisting young athletes to bring out the very best in themselves.

CONCLUSION

I can only hope that the young people that I train, manage and speak to about reaching for their goals in sport give themselves the opportunity to enjoy the same experiences I have by believing in themselves and enjoying all that sport has to offer. The achievements that we are here to recognise today can be the beginning of an exciting future for many of you that choose to make sport an ongoing part of your lives.

I can't promise everyone here today success in reaching their ultimate sporting dreams. What I can certainly promise is that those of you who are willing to face your challenges in sport and life with the same determination and passion, will always be able to walk proudly with your heads held high. You will be able to one day look proudly upon your achievements and failures knowing that you had dared to challenge yourself and lived your life to the fullest.