



## **Winning is More Than Records**

By Bill Gosse

Posted January 5, 2008

Perfection. The New England Patriots just accomplished it during the NFL regular season. It probably also still applies to everyone's New Year's resolutions.

Is perfection the basis for determining ultimate success?

If perfection is the determinant for historical rank, the Patriots should not be included in the discussions, because they have a blemish on their "record" as convicted cheaters. Has that been forgotten?

Likewise, Bill Belichick, the Patriots' coach, should not have been considered for Coach of the Year honors. I believe honors like that should be for those who hold the highest standards of integrity and sportsmanship.

What then can be used as a definition for success – for being a winner? Is "winning" involved in conquering a single game, or contest, or is it a way of life?

Because of the alarming rise of suicides among teens, the incredible turnover in high school coaches, and the increasingly poor treatment of game officials, it is obvious to me our society is having a difficult time grasping what it means to be a winner. The way people flock to those involved in championships, our culture says winning trophies is everything. You can have all the trophies in the world, however, and be a loser.

Quick, who won Super Bowl XXX? Dallas Cowboys.

How long does the true value of a championship last? I can't begin to tell you where all of my trophies are, but I can tell you where the memories are.

The journey is what matters, whether successful or not. It's about fully preparing and giving your all. If we participate simply for extrinsic rewards, the life lessons in sports can be lost.

John Wooden, who won 10 national collegiate basketball championships as a coach at UCLA, was quoted as saying the journey is the important thing. A score, a trophy, a medal is simply the prize. The so-called importance of a particular game didn't necessarily add to the satisfaction he felt in preparing for the contest. It was the daily journey he prized above all.

Is winning merely being a good person? I believe winning is partly defined by self-surrender – self-sacrifice.

Winning is thinking of others. It's about sharing the ball, playing tenacious defense, and encouraging your teammates. It's also about playing a different position for the benefit of the team, or displaying a great attitude while you wait for your playing time to possibly develop.

I heard one time that a team is only as good as its last player. If you're a starter, do you build that player up? If you're that player, are you trying to help your team get better?

Winning is a lifestyle, the substance of a person, not just a trophy or a place in a hall of fame.

As a basketball walk-on at Marquette in the early 1980s, I played in five games over two seasons. I felt I could be a regular contributor in the guard rotation, but I recognized my role to be the best practice player I could be. I could have complained about my playing time, but what would that have gotten me? A ticket out the door, that's for sure.

What trophies did I get? I got the rewards of enjoying my time with my teammates, my first jet rides to new cities, and helping Marquette go to two consecutive NCAA Tournaments. I enjoyed the opportunity to be able to give my best each and every day.

Whatever your journey is enjoy it, and choose to be a winner.