



It's a Privilege to Play for Your School Team

By Bill Gosse

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It's hard to believe it's August.

Packer training camp has begun, the fall sports teams are just about to begin their pre-season practices and the beginning of the new school year is right around the corner.

I want to take this time to point out what it means to be part of an athletic team, and there is one letter to start that conversation – the letter “P”.

“P” stands for “Privilege”.

It is a privilege for student athletes to be part of their school's sports teams. It is not a right.

A privilege is a special permission or benefit granted to or enjoyed by someone. It is a privilege to be able to put on the uniform of your school and to represent not only your school, but often an entire community. You also represent your family and yourself.

Notice where the word “yourself” landed in the sequence of entities represented. It was last.

This was illustrated so well in one particular scene in the movie “Miracle”, the film about the 1980 United States Men's Olympic Hockey team – an underdog that beat the vaunted Soviet Union. It was the story about how coach Herb Brooks molded and shaped a group of players from numerous schools and programs into a well-oiled, unselfish team.

During the movie, Coach Brooks repeatedly asks players their names and where they were from. This simple question later played a significant role in his development of the meaning of “Privilege”.

In one pre-Olympic exhibition, Brooks catches his players talking during the game about the girls in the stands instead of focusing on the task at hand. This costs the team in a big way.

After the game, Brooks forces the players to skate wind sprints over and over. He's so mad, he almost seems to want to skate them right through the ice. It seems like hours

before one of the players blurts out his name. Brooks asks him for whom he played and he said the United States of America.

Finally, Brooks gets through to his players that they aren't representing their schools or themselves – they're representing a greater cause: their country.

He convinces them the name on the front of the jersey is more important than the name on the back. He gets them to realize what a privilege it is to represent their country and they need to work for the good of their team – not for themselves.

Every student athlete who makes a sports team is representing his or her school first. The money spent in off-season training and camps shouldn't entitle an athlete to anything.

Being the best player on a team should not guarantee a spot the following year.

Representing one's school is a privilege, and a student athlete's behavior, effort and performance on and off the field of play should be the method for earning that spot every season.

Do you think Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick might have some thoughts on the privilege he may have wasted by not making the best of decisions?

Hopefully, high school student-athletes and their parents will realize how much of a privilege it is to represent their school, their community, their family and themselves on and off the field.