

Fighting

HUMAN NATURE

DECEMBER 2019

**TEAMWORK:
WHERE
SPORTS
BECOME
REALITY**



BROTHERHOOD

Other People Matter: Building a Culture of PRIDE

By Joey Pagano



In football, if one guy isn't all in, nobody succeeds. Whether you're the star quarterback or on the sideline — farthest from midfield — you owe your team respect.

That's teamwork in a nutshell. And, it goes beyond football. Teamwork is life. You can't go a day without interacting with — and influencing — other people, especially now, with the sharp rise in our use of technology.

But to have successful relationships, you have to be a true team player, and this was what my teammates and I heard often as members of the Fayetteville-Manlius High School football team.

Our coaches embraced our team culture as much as winning — and expected us to do the same. They said we had potential, but wouldn't reach it unless we valued one another and formed "bulletproof" bonds.

What made our relationships powerful is that I only knew a few of my teammates before the season. So there I was, this kid who everybody had heard whispers about, joining the football team.

I quickly built relationships with my teammates and coaches, whether it was by writing the preseason articles, texting in the group chat, or simply talking with our coaches so we could get to know one another. I forced everybody to look beyond my chair and get to know me.

Eventually, I was "just Joe," as one of my teammates, Andrew Testani, who I have been best friends with since elementary school, phrased it in an interview with Spectrum News. Whether I had known them since fourth grade or we were just getting to know one another, they valued who I was, not what I was.

They found ways to let me know how I inspired them. Many of the guys told me I forced them to be more open-minded and accepting, but I don't want to force anybody to be anything; I just want people to realize that disabilities don't define who a person is.

And I know these are the ones I can call friends. With Testani and many other former teammates, there's no judgment, sympathy or barriers. If I need help, they help me, but other than that, I am just another one of their friends, and our relationships align with the Other People Matter Mindset.

The phrase "Other People Matter" originated with Dr. Chris Peterson, one of the founders of positive psychology — and thesis advisor to Mike Erwin, The Positivity Project's co-founder and president. Erwin says Peterson would often begin his lectures with one central talking point:

“

I can sum up positive psychology in just three words — Other People Matter. Period. Anything that builds relationships between and among people is going to make you happy.

”

The Mindset provides people with an understanding of what positive psychology looks and sounds like.

It consists of identifying and appreciating the good in others, knowing that my words and actions affect others, supporting people when they struggle, cheering others' successes, and giving others my attention.

Each of these elements is very important — and tenets that everyone should strive to live by. However, I experienced one element in particular on the football team: supporting people when they struggle.

When it was time for everyone to retrieve their equipment for the season, we all headed up to PRIDE Hill to place PRIDE stickers on our teammates' helmets, a tradition that defines our football program

As the captains were decorating each helmet, I wondered if — and how — I would be a part of that tradition. Eventually, I figured that I wasn't going to get one because I didn't have a helmet. And, I felt fine with that.

But, I was wrong to make assumptions. When every helmet was full of PRIDE, my teammates greeted me at the bottom of PRIDE Hill. They gave me a box with jerseys, sweatpants, a jacket, and the sticker.

They pulled the sticker out of the box, and then placed it on the left side of the chair frame, directly above the drive wheel.

It was the defining moment of the season for me. The team -- players and coaches alike -- always reminded me that I was just another guy and treated me like that. From squirting water and hydrating me to refusing to break a team huddle until I was there, I was never any different than them.

EMBODYING THE OPM2 OTHER PEOPLE MATTER MINDSET



Appreciating the good in others



Knowing my choices impact others



Supporting others when they struggle



Cheering others' successes



Giving others my attention