

DEVELOPING WORK ETHIC

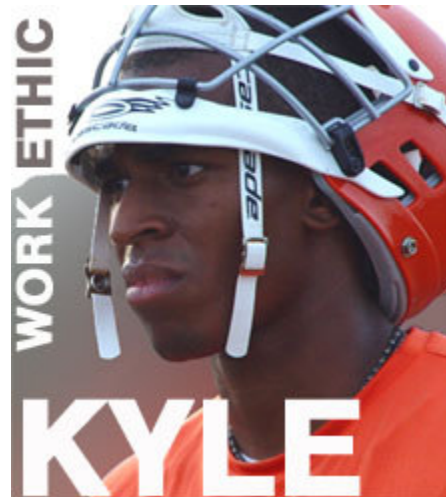
By Kyle Harrison

What's going on everybody? I'm back for round two! I hope everyone enjoyed the super bowl last weekend! Now, I'm a huge Ravens fan, but it was good to see the Bus go out on top. You gotta love that storybook ending. I just got back from Denver this week, where I ran a little shooting clinic with Matt Rzewkowski (Hopkins 05') at Denver East High school. That was a lot of fun. Anyway, this week I'll try and give a little advice that I wish I would have taken a little earlier on myself.

I think one of the most critical parts of being a talented athlete, and more importantly one of the most critical parts of succeeding and being happy in life is developing a strong work ethic. My parents attempted to instill this in me at an early age, but it wasn't until 9th grade that I really accepted it academically, and even later than that in terms of athletics.

I was a very average student growing up. I did as much as I had to do to get by and pretty much spent the rest of my time hanging out with my friends and playing sports. It wasn't until I got into 9th grade and failed a few history tests that I started realizing I wasn't going to be able to cruise my way through high school without trying. I'm by no means a dumb person. I simply just wasn't applying myself in school. I had dreamed of playing college sports and for the first time I realized that I would not get into college simply on athletic talents. I sat down with my history teacher and parents, and pretty much broke down. I was told "no matter how good you are at a particular sport, if you consistently fail at school, you won't be playing anywhere competitively." The disappointment in my parents' face was enough to make me want to turn the whole thing around. I had to find a balance between academics and athletics, and excel in both to get where I wanted.

To be completely honest, the whole transition was so simple. All it took, simply, was a dedication to time management, and work ethic. I began to study for tests earlier, and create flash cards to study during study hall, or any other free time I had during the day. I would dedicate my afternoons to practice and relaxing with my friends. If I had an important test the following day, I would go to sleep after practice, and wake up early the next morning to study. You have to find what works for you academically, whatever it takes. Find out when and how you do your best work and prioritize that time in order to really be successful. And it's not all about studying all night long guys. Simply plan ahead, and it all becomes easy in the end. Fortunately, I found the formula that worked for me before it got too late. But if you all can begin developing academic time management, along with a strong work ethic at a young age, I can only imagine how successful you all can be. So, please, work hard and work smart in school. I'm counting on you.



Athletic work ethic is a completely different animal, one that took me a long time to truly understand. As I mentioned in my first post, I didn't really focus heavily on one sport, and I encourage you to do the same. However, as I got older and into high school, I wish I would have developed some type of work ethic in athletics. I would practice hard and I loved playing, but when the practice or game was over my work stopped. I didn't do anything extra. I didn't lift. I didn't shoot more. I didn't do one on one's or practice my penalty kicks, and I most certainly didn't practice my footwork on defense. I'm not encouraging young kids to go out there and start lifting and turn into little meatheads. I'm just encouraging you all to take practice seriously and put in some extra effort. Really take your time and work on the shots and passes that you want to make in games. You watch Casey Powell and Gary Gait throw behind the backs and do all kinds of other tricks in games. They succeed at these fantastic feats because they've practiced them over and over again. It's no longer a trick. It's consistent, like any other shot or pass in their arsenals.

You may not believe now that working hard and doing a good job all the time, even when nobody's looking or grading you, will actually pay off in games? Well, I didn't either. I came into college as a pretty highly recruited athlete and got a lot of hype. While I had a few good games, in my opinion my freshmen year of college was the most embarrassing year of my life. As a "blue



chip," recruit, I scored 9 goals and had 4 assist. That's awful. I was so embarrassed that it drove me to work as hard as physically possible that entire summer to make sure nothing like that ever happened again. As a result, it hasn't.

It's a shame it took something like that happening to really open my eyes and see that I wasn't working nearly as hard as I needed to be. Coach Petro wrote me a letter after that year which is still posted up in my room at my parents house, "Greatness, awaits you, but only if you are willing to work for it." Well, I finally was. I began to lift extra. I began to study AJ Haugen, Jay Jalbert, Kevin Boland, Chris Rotelli, and a host of other midfielders on

film. I began shooting in the middle of the day in Baltimore when it was the hottest outside. I started to take pride in being one of the hardest working players around. It gives you an edge mentally. The knowledge that none of your opponents could have worked as hard as you and your teammates have has a tremendous impact. Don't take this the wrong way and go start lifting constantly at 12 years old. For now, just try to develop a work ethic, doing the things appropriate for your age group but doing them on an organized schedule and faithfully. When you're at practice, play as hard as you possibly can on every play, it'll pay off in the long run.

If you listen to the most successful people in our society, whether they're athletes, business men, political figures, they credit work ethic and discipline. It is the common ingredient for success. If you can figure that out right now, and really work on it, by the time you get to my age you'll be way past me!

So, I'm going to make my move. I have a flight to catch to California! I'll talk to you all soon, and you better work hard, 'cause I know I will be.