

Part III

The 10-80-10 Rule

I believe strongly that the “10-80-10 Rule” is alive and well in our lives. The Rule states that there are 10% of the people who believe that you are right no matter what you do. Then there is the next 80% who believe that the “cup is half-full” and who will give you the benefit of the doubt until you prove them wrong. Finally there is the 10% who sees the “cup as half-empty” and see only the negative and presume that you are always wrong, out for yourself, and not interested in the kids’ best interests. Take a look at any survey or evaluation and you will notice this 10% who express the negative. I always advise athletic administrators and coaches to pay attention to the “temperature” of the 80% because that is how you really know how you are doing. Keep them happy and you will find great overall success.

The Athletic Administrator’s goal then is to get the 80% to help control the 10%. If we can educate the 80% about our athletic programs and the support, modeling, and behavior that is acceptable, then they provide strong peer pressure on those who refuse to conform.

We know that parents feel their athlete is “special”, that their child can’t afford to fail, that “No” is not an acceptable answer anymore, that everyone should get rewarded for participation, and that scholarships are the “holy grail”. Our job is to educate parents and explain how we have common goals, *but may have a slightly different perspective on how to attain those.*

- We, too, feel that all our athletes are “special”, but none more special than the others – that the “victory of the We over the I” is what we strive to attain.
- Schools believe that we often learn more from our mistakes than from our successes, so we shouldn’t fear some failure. In fact, the ability to get back up after being knocked down constitutes the building of real winners in life.
- We understand that coaches can no longer just say, “No” ...they need to sell that answer as they demonstrate how a “no” today can lead to a “yes” tomorrow.
- Coaches need to emphasize “striving to win” over winning itself. Participation is good, but not enough. Effort is what should be rewarded.
- And finally, we need to be honest about the paucity of scholarships and make sure that athletes are playing for the right reasons.

When we sell these concepts, we enlist the 80% to help us with those few who just don’t quite get the message. Supportive parents are the primary and best model for the out-of-control few. Let’s educate and empower the 80% to help create a positive, sportsmanlike attitude in our stands. That will do more to bring the 10% around than anything else we can do.