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THE ATHLETE'S VIEW

CORNER

ATHLETE'S

When someone is on a breakaway, coming straight at me and there's no one between us, I sense that a big chance is coming up, a chance to prove that that's the reason I'm out there, to stop a play like that. That's pretty much the situation I live for.

I feel like I'm more on the offensive than defensive when the striker is coming at me, even if I am the goalkeeper. I try to dictate what he does. I try to play him into my hand by making him go to the side that I want him to go to. When I do this, I pretty much have him, I have the advantage.

While this is going on, I don't want to think about or be telling myself what to do because that means my mind's not focused on what I'm doing. I have to really concentrate on the situation. There's nothing in my head except just focusing, not even the roar of the crowd. Afterward, maybe three or four seconds after I stop the ball or the ball is in the net, the noise of the crowd starts to come back into my head.

It's total joy and exuberance when I block the kick. It's everything that I've worked for, everything I predicted. I save the goal and possibly the game. I mean, it's a breakaway and he's supposed to score, plain and simple. So if I do my job and come up big, then my team has a good chance of winning.



Timothy Liner

If he scores against me, ugh. I feel like I could have done something different. I feel like I *should* have done something different.

SEE CORNER, INSIDE

Education— A Whole New Game

From the president of the United States to the parents of disadvantaged, inner-city kids, Americans everywhere are saying that something has to be done about the disturbing conditions in our nation's schools.

At the same time, a culture's most pressing crisis can also be its best opportunity. Our educational problems have forced us to explore many options in an effort to solve these problems. As a result, education's new game is reform.

There are many variations of the reform game. Some focus on standards, others on instruction and curriculum, still others on vouchers and charter schools. Although well-intentioned, many of the calls are for increased emphasis on the same old stuff—more math, more science, more language arts, more technology—even though the status quo isn't getting the job done. This approach validates the premise put forth by social theorist George Leonard that whenever we're not getting something right, we try more advanced versions of the same thing.

Many people believe that participating in sports takes away from academic achievement. Because of this, they call for a decrease in the emphasis on sports in our schools and cut funding for sports and physical education programs. However, if we examine the appropriate, positive aspects of sport culture, we discover that sport can play a significant role in effective educational reform, contributing to a whole new game.

There are many characteristics of sport culture that can contribute to effective and lasting educational reform. Here are a few:

1. Self-paced learning. Athletes develop skills at their own pace, no matter their age, gender, ethnicity, or how hard they work. If a coach rushes an athlete to play at a level that exceeds his or her skills, that athlete is primed for injury or failure. At the same time, holding back an accomplished athlete will dampen enthusiasm and effort.

Students also develop knowledge and skills at their own pace. However, in school, to the misfortune of many, students are evaluated against one another, no matter what their rate or style of learning. The teacher sets the pace, not the learner.

As in sports, students should be encouraged to give their best effort and allowed to learn at their own rate. Some will need more drill, more practice, more repetition, and more review to master the material.

Rather than age or the abstract notion of being a sophomore or junior determining the caliber of work, the specific background, history, and skill level of the student should determine the depth and scope of study.

2. Mastery-based learning. In sports, you work on a skill continuously. In basketball, you don't practice shooting free throws during the first week of training, take a test, and then go on to other aspects of the game, only to forget how to shoot free throws because you won't be tested on them again. You practice shooting free throws *every day* until you do it well, and then you continue this practice every day after that.

In our schools, students move on to the next assignment, the next subject area, and the next

The positive aspects of sport culture can contribute to educational reform.

SEE EDUCATION, INSIDE

Message from the Director...

The new look of *The Athlete's View* reflects the changes going on at the American Sports Institute. We appreciate the freshness editor Amanda Smith brings to the publication. Besides the regular features, you'll see we've added a column called "PASS Profile" to highlight stories from PASS students. We've also added another page to give us more space to keep you informed about ASI and PASS happenings.

ASI's growth stems from the steady expansion of the PASS program and the generous support of people who believe, like we do, that sport can play a significant role in improving personal and social well-being in general, and education, in particular.

This support helps ASI pursue four essential activities: 1) Provide professional development training for teachers; 2) Develop curricula based on the eight *Fundamentals of Athletic Mastery* (FAMs); 3) Evaluate the impact of the PASS program; and 4) Expand awareness and build goodwill for sport.

You're invited to get involved. Financial contributions—tax-deductible, of course—are always welcome. In the next few months, ASI will move to a new office space. As anyone who has moved knows, it's an expensive endeavor. We welcome your donation, earmarked to cover moving expenses.

We need items for the silent and live auctions that are part of the ASI Golf Classic. Call if you can donate frequent flyer miles, hotel accommodations, wine, sports memorabilia, or other treasures.

We also welcome your time and talent. Check out the schedule of meetings and events on the back of *The View* and call us if you'd like to find out more. We're a growing team of people who share a commitment to making a difference. You're invited to be part of this important effort.

Finally, a fond farewell and best wishes to **Leslie DiCamillo** who served as ASI's bookkeeper for the past year-and-a-half.

Susan Kirsch is the Executive Director of the American Sports Institute.



PASS Profiled on National News

A crew from ABC's *World News Tonight* with Peter Jennings interviewed ASI President Joel Kirsch in preparation for a segment on the PASS program to air on "Solutions," a popular feature of the nightly news.

ASI Golf Classic at The Olympic Club

If you've ever dreamed of golfing at The Olympic Club, home of the U. S. Open in 1998, your dream can come true on Monday, June 30. Besides the splendor of the Ocean Course or the famous Lake Course, you can meet **Sandy Alderson, Ronnie Lott, Mike Montgomery, Bob Brenly, Merton Hanks**, and many other sports celebrities.

An enthusiastic team is working on the details—sponsorship, invitations, printing, prizes, dinner, auction items, celebrities, etc. If you'd like to get involved, please call Eric Huft-Robbins.

1997 PASS Benefit

Dave Morrison and **Kevin Bartram** have graciously agreed to serve as co-chairs for the Ninth Annual San Francisco PASS Benefit. In the Windy City, a team is meeting to discuss the feasibility of holding a **Chicago PASS Benefit**. If you're looking for a way to make a difference, a chance to get involved, a fine group of dedicated individuals, and a lot of fun, come to the next meeting (see calendar on the back) or call for more information.

The crew also visited two PASS schools in the San Francisco Bay Area—James Logan High School in Union City and Menlo-Atherton High School in Atherton. At Logan, a diverse group of 20 students participate in the PASS classes. John Goulding, the PASS teacher at Logan says, "Utilizing sports to help kids succeed in other areas is a great idea."

The piece is expected to air in March. Check our website at www.amersports.org for the date the segment will run.

Saluting Our Donors

Thanks to our recent donors: Fireman's Fund Foundation, McGraw Foundation, Law Offices of George Walker, Wareham Property Group, Margaret Williamson, Rosanne Cason, Dawes Family Fund, Scott & Cheri Elrod, Dr. Saul & Gloria Feldman, Gamboa & Company, Joseph Kellman, Sol & Sylvia Kirsch, Paul Stephens, Robert Begley, Ron Boose, Marc Christensen, Jane & Randy Creech, Mutsumi & Sam Daijogo, Aubrey Dent, Trisha & Jim Garlock, Cara Hall, Kathy Indermill, Peter Klein, Beth Levine, Andrew & Frances Oser, Rudy Picarelli, Charlie Setzler.



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VIEW

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PASS Moves to Middle School

It's 7:50 a.m. Already a number of students sit together talking, laughing, and looking at homework in Room 24 at Mill Valley Middle School. Students enter looking alert and happy to be in school.

As the clock clicks to precisely 8:00, two students scurry to their seats as instructor Janis Coblentz silently takes a stand in front of the class. She extends her arms in front of her, palms together. Without saying a word, 27 seventh and eighth grade boys and girls mirror her position. They wait with perfect silence and attentiveness as the last two students to arrive get books and papers stuffed into place. Everyone is focused and patient. Then in crisp unity, the silence is broken with two sharp claps. The middle school PASS class has begun.

Immediately, the students begin their eight-

open their eyes. An unhurried sense of peace and well-being fills the room.

After the eight minutes, the students are called back to attention, open their eyes, and sit quietly for a minute. No one talks. They then stand for physical activities that emphasize balance, rhythm, relaxation, and power. The light exercises oxygenate the blood, creating greater alertness and memory retention.

Next, the class recognizes the *Athlete of the Day*. A banner in front of the room announces that today's athlete is Dustin, a seventh grader. "Who has something to say about our athlete of the day?" Coblentz asks, and six hands shoot up. "I like his sense of humor," one student offers. "He always seems to have a smile," says another. "I didn't know him very well before this class, but I've gotten

to know him in PASS, and I think he's nice," says an eighth grader.

After students share their feedback, Coblentz adds that Dustin seems to have learned how to balance his 13-year-old exuberance and playfulness with an understanding of when to be serious and

focused. "Dustin's teachers tell me he's taking a leadership role in his other classes," Coblentz explains. The acknowledgment ends with sustained and enthusiastic applause while Dustin and his classmates beam in mutual respect.

Peter Donoff, the PASS instructor at Bayside/Martin Luther King School in Sausalito, was the first to adapt the PASS curriculum to the middle school level, and has been using it since 1993. "Athlete of the Day is my favorite part of the PASS curriculum," says Donoff. "Usually kids at this age

talk in a series of put downs and insincere chatter. This is the only time they really seem to connect and get beyond the clothes they're wearing or the cost of their sneakers.

"They're insightful. For example, they'll say, 'Natasha's a good basketball player, but she needs to work on her attitude with the coach.' They nail each other with honesty, and it leads to conversations filled with self-discovery. The kids open up."

Carmen Guy teaches PASS at Wirth Experimental School in Chicago. Eighth grader Ashley Smith says, "The PASS class has helped me build up my self-confidence and I focus much more in my classes. The PASS class has also helped me raise my math grade from a C to a B+."

Besides Coblentz, John Carroll teaches the PASS class at Mill Valley Middle School. Marilyn Angelo, whose son Joe is in Carroll's class, says Joe's soccer coach heard him explain his philosophy of life and was impressed with how directed and focused he was.

"He's getting that from PASS," Marilyn says. "And I've noticed how much more disciplined he is in all his other studies, tackling homework without a lot of direction from me. He seems to be getting much more knowledgeable and comfortable with himself."

Mill Valley Middle School principal Jan Austin says, "PASS classes give our students the opportunity to realize that their athletic accomplishments are the result of their personal commitment to doing their best. This consciousness enables these students to develop the habits of mind that promote excellence in all of their endeavors."

There's a minute before the bell rings at Mill Valley Middle School to mark the end of first period. Dustin, the Athlete of the Day, walks to the front of the room and takes the extended-arms, palms-together position his teacher did at the beginning of class. He exudes confidence as he faces his peers, waiting for everyone to extend their hands. Silence. Presence. Respect. Discipline. Focus. Two sharp claps from 27 students sound like one.

Students break to go to their next class, carrying with them principles of sport that will help them be successful in math, science, English, and all their other endeavors.



Janis Coblentz leads the Clap-In at Mill Valley Middle School

minute concentration practice. Coblentz reminds them to place their feet flat on the floor, rest their hands on their lap, relax their shoulders, and focus on their center. "If any thoughts enter your mind, let them pass and return to concentrating on your center," she tells them. "Eyes closed. Five, four, three, two, one—begin."

With perfect discipline, every student cooperates. There's no horseplay. No objections. No slackers. Even when the teacher slams down a book to test them, the students don't flinch. They don't even

EDUCATION'S NEW GAME

Students should have to demonstrate their knowledge and skill by showing, performing, or competing in front of many members of the community. In this way, the importance of learning becomes very real and valued by the students.

7. Team-oriented learning. Coaches know that teams are made up of individuals. In order that the individuals see themselves as part of a larger cause, something that goes beyond themselves, they must experience a sense of place and belonging.

When participating in team sports, students learn that their effort and their growth and development is important to the success of the team. If one person doesn't do his or her job on a particular play, the whole team suffers. And if everyone does their job, the entire team benefits. From this perspective, students quickly learn that, "You count!!! You matter to *all* of us!!! And so does everyone else." As the Jewish teacher Hillel once wrote, "If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I?"

In our schools, students get their own grades for their own benefit. There is little, if any, sense of belonging to something bigger, to contributing to the growth and development of others.

Students need to be responsible for the scholastic performance of their peers as well as for themselves. Every student should know how everyone else is doing academically. They should have time to help one another to ensure everyone's success. When one student does well, we all do well. When one student does poorly, we all do poorly. Whether as a nation or a school, united we stand, divided we fall—or fail. As with sports teams, students must feel a sense of place and belonging, a sense of importance to the success of everyone.

8. Character development. Coaches know that the quality and success of a team is directly related to the character of its players. Character keeps athletes vigilant in victory and strong in defeat. Character enables athletes to deal with adversity. The attitude of one athlete can lift or destroy an entire team. Coaches often say they would rather have a good player with a great attitude than a great player with a bad attitude. This is why good coaches are constantly working with their athletes on character issues.

In our schools, the usual focus is on subject matter—math, language arts, science, technology—in other words, knowledge, rather than the subjects that really matter and the reason schools are there in the first place—the students.

Mohandas Gandhi spoke of knowledge without character as one of the *Seven Deadly Sins*. And it

was the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. who wrote, "The function of education . . . is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society . . . The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals."

Character development needs to be a major focus in our schools. Learning patience, perseverance, how to stay positive when everything is caving in around you, self-control, tolerance, compassion, humility, and self-assertiveness should be emphasized in our schools as much as subject-matter knowledge. If this were done, less time would have to be spent on problems with misbehavior in classrooms and society.

Sport culture is by no means perfect. However, as millions of coaches and athletes have learned and effectively demonstrated, there are many aspects of sport culture that are positive and that promote growth and development.

At a time when what is going on *inside* America's classrooms is being seriously questioned, it may be wise to look at what goes on *outside* the classroom—at what takes place on the athletic fields and courts of America—and bring the positive aspects of sport culture indoors. It was the Canadian educator Marshall McLuhan who once said, "I don't know who discovered water, but I know it wasn't the fish."

Education is a very important game, and there are all sorts of *players* vying for a position on the reform team. By bringing the positive aspects of sport culture into the classroom, we can use the tried and true methods of learning through sport to create a whole new game that promotes academic achievement and character in all of America's children.

ATHLETE'S CORNER

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There aren't many goals that go past me that I think, "Oh that was a good shot. He scored on me and hats off to him." It's pretty much, "Had I done something a little different, I would of had it." It's kind of a let down.

Once I'm scored on, I have just 20 seconds or so to think about it while the referee's setting the ball up at midfield for the kickoff. Then, all of a sudden, I just block it out, because if I continue to think about the goal, chances are I'll be scored on again.

Tom Liner is a goalkeeper for the San Jose Clash

PASS Profile

While I was on vacation in Hawaii, sitting on the beach, relaxing, I couldn't believe how much better it felt to be removed from the high-speed business world. I was especially wound up with the pressures of trying to start a new business while maintaining my sanity and current job. With no time to rest, I couldn't focus clearly on anything.

It was then I realized I was going about things all wrong. Rush, rush, rush is no way to get things done the right way. How was my business going to be successful with no planning? What exactly were my goals?

I thought back to my days in the PASS class. We had goals for improving ourselves, both on and off the field. But we didn't just say, "I want to improve," and leave it at that. We set specific goals and used the *Fundamentals of Athletic Mastery* (FAMs) to achieve those goals. I had improved my grades from a 2.0 to a 3.33 GPA in a semester's time. I had also reduced my time in the 40-yard-dash from 5.5 to 5.0 seconds. On the beach, I thought, "If the FAMs helped me then, they can help me now."

The first thing that came to mind was *concentration*. I knew I had a tough road ahead and that I had to stay focused. Then *flexibility* came to mind. I had to understand that things may take longer or shorter to accomplish, but I had to be ready no matter what turn they took. Along with staying *relaxed*, I had to be sure to have *balance* in my life. Too much of one thing and not enough of another could affect my *attitude* in negative ways. I needed full *power* to further my chances of success.

I remembered using these fundamentals in my life before, and getting positive results. I know that my success is because of my hard work. I know that as I continue to use the FAMs, I can achieve just about anything. The FAMs that I learned in the PASS class have helped me in every aspect of my life.

I knew what I needed to do. I thought, "So let's get to it." Then I said to myself, "Not yet, I think I'll lay here a while and start on that relaxation thing."

In 1989, Anthony Olson participated in the first PASS class, taught at McAteer High School in San Francisco



A Cuban's Viewpoint on Baseball and Family

On July 29, 1995, Osvaldo Fernandez, a star pitcher for the Cuban National Team, defected to the United States.

It was a very difficult thing to do, leaving behind my wife, my mother, my father, my kids. Not knowing when I would see them again was painful. It was a very, very tough decision, but the only way I could make things better for my family, regardless of whether or not I would see them again. What was important was to be able to come here and get money to my family so they could live better.

Having my family and me riding a bicycle

everywhere, not being able to buy food, not being able to be better clothed, I didn't want this for my family. I wanted them to have better living conditions, better nutrition—overall, just a better way of life. I knew I could only do that by making the sacrifice and jumping to come over here to play major league baseball and make the money to take care of *all* my family.

What made things even more difficult was that for obvious security reasons, I couldn't tell anyone what I was going to do, when and where I was going to defect. I didn't even tell my wife.

For a number of months after I defected, my

wife and other family members were called in and interrogated by Cuban government officials. It was very stressful for her because I hadn't told her anything, so she only knew what everyone else knew, that I had defected. Eventually, I was able to get her and my kids out of Cuba, but most of my relatives are still there.

Osvaldo Fernandez is a pitcher for the San Francisco Giants. He and his family now reside in the Dominican Republic. Carlos Alfonso, Giants first-base coach, served as an interpreter for this interview.



A NEW GAME FOR EDUCATION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

grade level even if they haven't mastered the subject matter.

Students should not be allowed to go on to the next lesson, subject area, or grade level until they have mastered the current one, no matter how many times they have to work and rework an assignment. If students are allowed to get by with C's, D's and F's (on a bell curve, this means 70% of all students), then mediocrity is the norm, not mastery. This perspective goes hand-in-hand with self-paced learning.

Mastery-based learning means that fewer subjects will be covered but they will be covered in-depth. Here, quality is valued over quantity.

3. Relevance. In sports, athletes are motivated to spend countless hours on the basics because they are relevant. In track, for example, runners understand why they go through drills related to speed, power, and endurance. This is why they work so hard, even at the end of the school day.

In our schools, kids are *told* they must learn something whether they see the relevance of it or not. While the students may need to learn something, if *they* do not see the relevance of it, they will resist and perform below their potential. Students with high self-esteem balk at seemingly meaningless or irrelevant work. Too often, teachers don't relate the subject matter to relevant issues in the students' lives.

Students must first see a need to learn some-

thing before they will embrace it. There must be a context for the learning. Going to college or getting a job is a reach for a 12-year-old middle school student. As John Dewey once wrote, "Education is a process of living, not a preparation for the future."

4. Engagement. Athletes know they must be actively engaged in the learning process or they simply will not improve their skill level. A coach does not enhance her athletes' skills by having them read a book, take a test, and then go on to the next chapter. The athlete learns by doing, by being fully engaged in the learning process.

In most classrooms, students spend their time passively listening to lectures, reading, answering questions, and taking tests. There is little, if any, real-life connection to the subject.

Students need to be engaged in the learning process. The more active *they* are, the more active the learning. Students must not be subjected to mere abstract thought, theories, and information, but must be *a part of* the subject.

5. Learning through coaching. A coach demonstrates how to do something, explains why it should be done a certain way, and then has the athlete do it over and over—with the coach stepping in when necessary to correct—until the athlete can perform at a high standard.

For example, by demonstrating how to shoot a free throw, explaining why free throws are shot that way, and then having the athlete practice shooting free throws under the coach's watchful eye, real,

practical learning takes place. There is constant practice by the athlete and ongoing feedback from the coach.

In our schools, teachers usually demonstrate once, explain once, and the students then work on the assignment. Feedback comes in the way of grades on papers rather than through constant feedback from the teacher until the work has been mastered.

For our schools to be effective, teachers must act more like coaches who give constant feedback to their students until the required skill level is reached. Ongoing feedback from the teacher-as-coach is necessary to guarantee high-level performance.

6. Demonstration learning. In sports, you show, perform, or compete in front of others to demonstrate your skill level. Athletes not only have to be good at what they do, they must also do it in front of others.

Family, friends, and community members attend the events in which the athletes are *evaluated*. Being subjected to the scrutiny of others adds to the positive tension and motivation for wanting to do well.

In schools, in many instances, a student's academic performance is scrutinized by one person—the teacher. Often, this comprises very little *social* incentive to perform well. Students aren't always motivated to do their best because they aren't subjected to the watchful eye of a larger audience.

SEE EDUCATION, NEXT PAGE