



MIKE KERN

BC SCHOOL SPORTS COACH OF THE MONTH JANUARY 2009

School: NorKam Secondary.
Years Coaching: 25 plus years.
Currently Coaching: Volleyball, basketball and track and field.
Also coached: Gymnastics, badminton, soccer, and many other activities.
Subjects: Presently physical education.



What has been the most rewarding thing about being a teacher coach?

Witnessing young people reach their goals; their successes are your rewards. It's very gratifying seeing youngsters better themselves and it feels even better when you know that they are able to recognize these improvements themselves without you as a coach having to inform them of these gains. It's really gratifying witnessing this intrinsic desire and dedication in their chosen sport multiply or grow as a result of their hard work. As a result, their levels of work ethic escalate and this can be really contagious to others.

Describe how you found sport in your life?

As kids we were out participating in some form of activity; generally sports or games. We would often invent our own games and that was our form of recreation. We got outside and did things - sports and outdoor recreational activities were our thing.

My parents were really great - they quietly encouraged and supported myself, my sisters, and others in the community to get involved in many worthwhile activities. My parents were instrumental in setting up new recreation centres in our neighbourhood and starting and supporting many community programs and clubs. They gave a whole lot more than they ever took from the community. I feel very proud and blessed that I have such wonderful parents. I also have three athletic sisters; one's a principal, the other's a teacher, and the other is very active herself within her local community.

What do you believe would resonate with the teacher coach of today in terms of recognition?

What you're doing right now is really nice. It's also important to recognize the time and energy coaches devote at other times throughout the year. It's nice to get recognition from peers and acknowledgement in a public setting. There are a lot of coaches out there who are tremendously conscientious in what they do. Their hearts are deeply in their work and they have a lot of passion working with those under their care. The bottom line is that most coaches get their satisfaction or recognition from

the individual athletes themselves because most coaches are primarily doing it for the athletes. Acknowledgement from individual athletes themselves in the form of a simple thank you or compliment can be very satisfying for a coach.

There's this old Japanese saying that goes something like, "One compliment can warm five winters". One compliment can go a long way with a coach; particularly if its from an athlete.

What has coaching taught you about life?

That a strong work ethic really does pay off in huge dividends. That things don't always go your way. That there's likely always going to be someone out there stronger and faster than you. That you should not always compare yourself to others - be the best you can be. That you should keep things in perspective - there are things more important in life than whether you win or lose a game. Of course things like character, good habits, discipline, self-control, cooperation, and patience are just some of the other qualities that can be gained through athletic participation.

What was your proudest moment?

There's been a whole whack of times when I have witnessed teams and individuals do really well. Although you may have taught a particular skill hundreds upon hundreds of times, for many youngsters, it may be their very first time being introduced to that skill. When they do perform the skill or come closer to mastering the skill it can be a hugely gratifying experience for them and this excitement can rub off on you as a coach. When they experience a win or personal achievement and get emotional about it - that's when you can get emotional too. Sport can be a very emotional activity. It's very satisfying witnessing others better themselves in a way that does not require you to tell them about these improvements.

Who would you identify as a role model or mentor in your life specific to coaching?

There have been many individuals who have been great models in my coaching life. My sisters were all very strong academically and athletically. My parents were really instrumental in supporting my efforts along the way. They were both strong and gentle in their influence. My parents had always done a lot of volunteering in the community and these contributions and efforts did not go unnoticed by us as kids.

I had a series of coaches at both the elementary and secondary levels - including club coaches who spent a great deal of time and energy with us as athletes. I remember one of my high school teachers picking me up each Sunday morning to do running hill workouts at Stanley Park. We were fortunate to have many wonderful individuals out there who contributed to our growth.

Describe your first coaching experience.

It was through our local recreation centres. I remember being asked to coach volleyball. I also did basketball, gymnastics and trampoline programs as well as many other activities. Those were great times for me. I look back at those days and they were a lot of fun. I also helped run many summer sports camps. Those programs were really developmental in nature and I learned a lot about myself and different coaching and teaching practises. I considered it to be a real privilege to be involved in these programs.

Other facts about Mike.

For many coaches our life revolves around school and our sport - sometimes we have to remind ourselves to have some balance - to live some life outside our school activity. I enjoy doing a lot of outdoor pursuits like biking and running.