

Family Matters 27, 2007-08
Athletics Provide Valuable Life Lessons

A ball in motion. Sneakers squeaking on a hardwood floor. Sweat. Concentration. Determination. Yelling, whistles, cheers, tears. This is the arena in which many of our children learn some of the most critical lessons of life. The focus and perseverance they practice in the arena of athletic competition have the potential to enhance the work they do throughout their lives. And when they come to understand that the power of the team is greater than the power of one, it is then they have begun to learn the lessons of leadership that will enable them to accomplish much important work.

My obligations as a graduate student leave me little time for recreational activities, so being at the Athletic Banquet last night was a cherished peek into a world I rarely experience. To an outsider, it's a mysterious culture. The hard work, the loyalty, the drive of competition, the spirit and intense emotions— these are the energies that serve well in the laboratory of life. It is truly remarkable how a ball and a court can bring out the best that we have. They inspire us to hyper-focus, to make of many arms and legs and minds a graceful dance of single purpose, to apply practiced rituals with only momentary reaction time, to reach for big goals.

I'm not sure I understand how it works, but athletics gives our kids something of rare value. And we are blessed at St. Robert to have a parish athletics program that is second to none. As we reflect back on our 2007-2008 sports seasons, let's remember to thank our outstanding Athletic Director, along with the parents, coaches, and teammates who gave our children a chance to discover what they're made of. And let's remember to help our children to carry those valuable lessons with them into the real work of life.

Congratulations to the winners of the Russ Janowiak Award, who are our models of the athletes who have done just that. ***Emma Strode*** and ***Joe Jarosz*** were chosen for many laudable qualities they have taken from the court into the classroom and the community. Perhaps greatest among these is their ability to persevere with a positive attitude in the face of adversity. They have learned well the valuable lessons of athletic participation. These lessons will carry them far.