

## IN THE GAME

with Linda Derk



**M**otivation is the key behind any successful endeavor. Without it, there seems to be a lack of purpose. This lack of purpose, or lack of mission will reflect in all aspects of an athlete's performance...physical, fundamental, mental and focus.

I have seen many athletes with a tremendous amount of athletic ability over the years and no motivation to go with it...this is why I

always say I will take a team full of kids with the right attitude and effort before I take the most talented.

Every athlete is motivated in some way. The key is to find the source for each individual athlete and apply it. Motivation is like fuel, you need fuel in your body to survive, you need fuel in your gas tank to drive your car. Without it you can only get so far.

As a coach at all levels, I have found that my athletes on a professional and college level were highly motivated. Without it they would have never achieved the level they did.

There are two forms of motivation: Internal or external motivation. Internal motivation can be defined as a product of an individual's personality traits. Internal motivation can be enhanced by

## GET FIRED UP!

### WHAT MOTIVATES AN ATHLETE TO BE SUCCESSFUL AND STAY IN THE GAME?

knowledge, environment, circumstances, maturity, etc...But, usually I can determine an athlete's internal motivation, almost exclusively on personal traits.

External motivation is something that comes from outside to motivate an athlete...usually the athletes that rely on external motivation to succeed find themselves with a slower athletic development and short term success, as opposed to long term success.

In elite athletics you will find individuals with many different personality types and traits. There are certain personality traits that are commonly found in the elite athlete. I have found, over the years, that most coachable athletes are open minded, eager to learn, curious, hardworking, and possess a high level of respect for themselves, others and the game. They typically set high standards for themselves, have a high level of commitment and pride. They also have the ability to remain objective and to differentiate between the athlete on the field and the person off the field. The most coachable athletes welcome feedback, love to be challenged and have a passion for the game. That is what "motivates" them to become students of the game at a high level.

I think as a coach there is an obligation to the athlete to provide some level of external motivation. But, the true key to an athlete's success is the internal motivation. This is the drive that separates the good athletes from the great athletes. It provides the athlete with the discipline to train hard, and the desire to maintain the traits mentioned above to consistently play the game year in and year out. Internal motivation, most often is the key to long term success and to avoiding burnout.