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I've tried to be balanced in my recent columns about coaches (and/or teachers and parents) but have had many friends and readers tell me I have come down more harshly on the above mentioned category while seeming to give more lenience to the younger or coached set of players in the game.

There is a reason for this, at least in my mind. Empathy is more often deserved by those with the least amount of power, be it players of a game, entry-level workers, or Privates in the military.

They all need to be trained by those in power. It is a common trait they all share. When they are better trained, the equanimity gets closer together and the trainers don't have to work nearly as hard as in the early stages.

Some coaches truly believe that harsher, longer training will result in a better product in a shorter amount of time. Seldom is that the case; the opposite is usually true.

Understanding and patience are much better tools to developing young minds, but that does not mean that every neophyte will completely receive that message. There is also a marked difference between how much of those qualities are needed to obtain the necessary results. Too much and the bad training starts again; too little and the effort becomes wasted and meaningless.

In sports of any kind, certain basic requirements must be met: conditioning, practice, and repetitions are just three of them. Of these three, none can be eliminated without affecting the

overall effort to succeed, but none are good enough by themselves to be the deciding factor in winning.

Conditioning may be thought to be the most important. A strong body is a powerful tool to use in almost any athletic endeavor. Athletes can rely on one favorite strength – arms, legs, hands, back – without realizing they need an overall strength to balance out their needs. An athlete who believes that only the legs will win a race may discover that the other parts of the body grow lax and useless, and they will be beaten out by other runners who have not neglected them.

Practice is also important, but again both the offense and defense should be stressed. A player may complain they are only a linebacker and don't need to practice offense, but if they or another team member controls a turnover during a game, the defensive unit immediately becomes an offensive unit and as such, should know what to do without even thinking about it. If a reader thinks this is easy, just watch what happens in a lot of games when this occurs! Humorous, maybe, but the results can also determine the outcome of the game.

Repetitions are also necessary in practice: which hole to run through; how far downfield is the buttonhook and in which direction; will the pitcher throw a curve on this pitch; will the batter hit it to the right or left of the fielder; and the list goes on and on. Total anticipation of every circumstance would be nice but it is totally impossible in a large number of cases, even by the professionals.

Desire is yet another necessary attribute the player must bring to their game. It includes the mindset that the player will work harder on a daily basis, that they will practice even by themselves if necessary, and log in all the repetitions they are capable of so that every step, swing, shot or tackle will result in a positive outcome.

The victim of a disease in early childhood could have left a young person wheelchair-bound for life, but they fought through a lack of balance, atrophied muscles, and a lonely farm-existence to eventually become a fair athlete. Not a super-star in anyone's estimation, but one who could participate in several sports with good results, even above average in some cases at certain times. The desire in this victim was so intense that practice became a tennis ball bounced against the side of his father's barn for hours, caroming back at different angles that forced movement to the right and the left; batting practice was a matter of hitting small rocks with a broomstick, after tossing the stones in an arc that descended through the strike zone. For

basketball – the only other known sport to this youngster – the practice was at first underhanded in order to reach the goal, then more countless hours later in life from the right, left, and center: jump, hook, or set.

It's too easy to say 'I can't' and allow life to move around you in the passing lane. Unfortunately, we have too many in our world having that particular mindset. Get up, and move it, move it!

Another Friday, another Homecoming coming up. Gallup High this time, so hope to see you all in the bleachers!