

## TEAMWORK

By Tony Johnson

Coach Johnson says.....

***“Teamwork is not only applicable is sports, but in all aspects of life. Understand your role, be supportive and be a team player!”***

Through my years of involvement in sports and business, I have come to learn the importance of teamwork in achieving success. In 2000, I shared an incredible journey along with over thirty players and staff as the Pirates made professional football history by completing a perfect 17-0 championship season.

But my real appreciation for teamwork was shaped during the spring of 1984.

As a senior shot putter on the Farmington track and field team, 1984 was going to be my year. In the two previous years, I had finished 7<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state meet in Charleston. I had worked very hard in the weight room and had practiced relentlessly with the ultimate goal of being the class A state champion.

Little did I know that in Riverton, Illinois an athlete named Sean Canaday also had the same goal.

To make a long story short, Sean and I battled into the Saturday finals in Charleston. But when it came time to hand out the medals at the end of the event, I took the 2<sup>nd</sup> place position next to Sean despite one of my better performances of the year..

Devastated that I hadn't reach my goal, I asked my parents to take me home prior to the start of the track finals. I jumped in the back on an old blue Chevy Impala and pouted all the way back to Farmington.

What's this story have to do about teamwork?

It's very important to note that I was just one of eleven Farmington athletes making the trip to Charleston that weekend. Curt Anderson, Joe Clark, Brian Keith, Jerry Goodin, Jim Kirkley, Marty Nutter, Casey Martin, Steve McAlearney, Scott Stevens, Randy Button and I had coach Dave Giagnoni optimistic about the chances of a possible top five team finish for the purple and gold.

That optimism turned to reality when my second place finish was combined with top three finishes by my teammates in the 4x100, 4x200 and 4x400 sprint relays to give Farmington East the 3<sup>rd</sup> place trophy over Peoria Bergan.

The Farmers...one of the top three track and field teams in the state of Illinois. Only perennial powerhouses Melrose Park and Cairo were better that year. It was truly a special moment!

But while my teammates were performing at their personal bests and standing on the awards podium, I was pouting my way along I-74 in the back of a blue Impala.

Later that evening, I received a phone call. “We’ve got the third place trophy. Meet us at the fire station, They’re bringing out the fire trucks for a parade around town.” said an excited coach Giagnoni.

It's then that I first realized what I hadn't done. I hadn't been there to support my friends. I hadn't been there to share in the celebration. I hadn't been there with the team!

I rode on the fire truck through Farmington that evening, but I felt like I should have been under it!

They say the “the best lessons in life aren't taught, they're learned”. And I learned a valuable lesson about teamwork that spring day.

In “Treasure Life”, I challenge students to be team players and emphasize that teamwork does not only apply to sports, but also is important in school, work, family and all aspects of life.

Remember, “Treasure Life ... Everyday!”



Quote to remember:

“Individual commitment to a group effort, gentlemen, that's what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.”  
- Vince Lombardi -

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“Treasure Life” is a positive life message created by Caterpillar manager and Peoria Pirates coach, Tony Johnson. The program encourages students to be “pirates” by filling their “treasure” chests each day with some of life's most valuable traits, values and experiences. The “Treasure Life” program has been recognized as one of the Arena Football League's best community relations program.