

## REMEMBER

In a brief cutaway scene in the Star Trek movie Wrath of Kahn, Mr. Spock subtly mind melds with Captain Kirk and murmurs “remember”

Now that I have lost all credibility by revealing myself as a Trekkie, I want you boys to remember what I will tell you this afternoon. Unlike Suzie and Sherry, our senior son did not play for years with the other boys in Youth Football.

Combine that with the sad fact that I have a mental defect that allows me to actually enjoy watching your practices maybe I’m a special case parent ...everybody celebrates the Friday Night Lights of the games, but I have seen your boys practice in heat and freeze, rain, wind and dark, and in these few words I can report back what I saw, and what I think it means...

First, as an old coach who has talked to other coaches, and a bunch of the college type of the last few months, Hands practices are different. Not the pregame, game and post game days – they are pretty normal. Not the year round conditioning, everybody does that now. It’s the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday grind where 3 hours is the minimum and 4 hours is not the limit. Where 1 hour of full contact can easily become 2. When I visited with some Div 3 schools this year and they asked about the Hand program, it was not the records that made their eyes widen – it was those 3 days of extreme effort.

It’s that effort that made Hand one of the handful of Connecticut high schools that college coaches know about outside of the state – not because they know about your effort in practice but they see the results. This program competes, and usually triumphs over schools twice as large. Everyone knows about the winning tradition, but the boys cannot know the other impact of their practices.

I usually only saw the last hour or so, and I only made it to about 100 of them – and like any team, there were up days and flat days, miraculous moments and grinding repetition. But there was one reality that you should all know – there was dedication.

Dedication, hours and hours and hours of effort – some more focused than others, but a spirit that made these 3 and 4-hour sessions of sweat, yelling, laughter and blood, pain and joy worth it.

Whether winning or losing, these boys showed up – at times of grim determination, and at times of free pizza – but these senior boys showed up, practice after practice, year after year, two-way starters and those who only had hope to play in a game.

Obviously these boys were dedicated, and that is due to who they are and who their coaches are – and that dedication allowed these hour upon hour afternoons into evenings to happen, and

allowed this team to have exceptional moments in their last season at Hand. But this level of Dedication, at your tender age has a bi-product I'd like to share with you.

You are 19 men of different outlooks and values and futures:

One of you will go to an Ivy League school

One of you will run into burning buildings and save lives

Another will go back to another year of high school to get better

And another will be a Dip

But all of you, ALL of you will do noble things and make stupid mistakes. A few of you will play football again, but most of you won't. All of you will be leaving Hand.

But the thing you cannot leave, what is, finally the fruit of so much dedicated time and focus, the one thing that can never leave you is football. It's an incurable infection really, causing flashbacks and moments of extreme clarity.

So as you sit here, ready to receive the words and awards of your coaches, **remember** that I warned you that you cannot shake it – the memories and experiences of playing this game simply well up and wash over you – I still think I'm wearing cleats.

You have given of yourselves as few people do, and that experience will now give back to you for the rest of your lives...