

Shooting from the hip: Time with Leo is time well spent

by Scott Schulte

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Have you ever talked with Dave Leo? Not in a professional capacity or anything like that, but just shooting the bull.

I've been fortunate enough to have a few of these conversations, but last Friday after Davis' win over Viewmont, I stood in the cold rain (and I HATE to be cold) and after waiting for Coach Leo for what seemed to be forever, we started talking.

Any time I talk to Coach Leo I feel like I'm sitting in a pub in my New England home town talking with an old fisherman (no offense, Dave). You know, the kind of guy who'll always say no matter how bad a storm is, that it's not as bad as the hurricane of '38.

Like usual, Coach Leo didn't talk much about the baseball game that had just been played, really. He hit on a bunch of more interesting, more important topics.

"All of this," he said with hand gestures that reminded me of Burt Lancaster's Moonlight Graham's character. "This isn't about baseball, really. It's about helping kids get ready for life."

Coach Leo went on, "What are you gonna do in life when you're faced with hard times? You gonna quit? Life is hard and our job as coaches is to prepare young people to face life.

"OK, for example, this team, we got hammered by Viewmont two days ago, so what were we gonna do? We could quit and not even show up today or we could come out here today and be determined, not necessarily to win, but to play our hardest and do better."

Then he pointed over to where the Viewmont team was meeting and continued, "and I know Roger (Farnsworth). He'll have his team bouncing back, ready for the next game. That's what he does. That is what we all do as coaches."

The rain-snow mix got harder and it was cold but neither one of us budged. Coach Leo talked and I was soaking it all in.

"Sports are great. I mean I see all of these different, newer sports coming around and it's great. I love to watch my nephews play hockey, and lacrosse and rugby are gaining in popularity. It's great. It's more opportunity for more kids to play sports.

"When these kids come back for their class reunions in 25 years, these are times they will talk about... 'remember that time on the bus...or remember that game or this game or that funny thing that happened at practice?'"

Coach Leo, like so many other coaches, then talked about how the greatest moments of being a coach have nothing to do with wins, even state championships.

“It’s so great when you see your athletes go on in their lives and have families of their own. The wedding announcements. Those kinds of things.

“I’ve been doing this for 35 years and I am so thankful I have been able to be involved in these kids’ lives. It’s great. They bring me a lot of happiness.”

Well, Coach, we appreciate you and all of the tremendous coaches in our area.

Thanks to all of you.

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