

Sports 2 Day

dallasnews.com



PERSPECTIVE

Coach Knight holds court with teachings

By Dawn Reiss

Staff Writer

Bob Knight is more than images of chair throwing and player confrontation. He is a father. He is a son. He is a husband. He is a Hall of Fame coach. He is arrogant, and he is passionate. He was my teacher.

I was a senior in college when I took Knight's final basketball coaching class during his last full season at Indiana University in the fall of 1999.

I wasn't sure what to expect before taking the class. My friends had different opinions about Coach Knight. Some hated him and would have spit in his eye, while others enshrined him in photos on their bedroom walls.

The first day of class, 80-some students sat in the basketball press room hungry for Coach Knight's knowledge. The class lasted for almost two hours, twice a week, for eight weeks. If you missed once, you received a C; if you missed twice, you failed; and if you were late, it was considered an absence.

Coach Knight taught most of the lectures, while former Indiana assistant coach and current Chicago Bulls assistant Norm Ellenberger

taught the lab on Assembly Hall's playing floor. Class grading was based on attendance and a notebook containing charts di-

"As a senior in high school, I had a basketball coach that I hated. I learned as much from him as anyone else."

— Bob Knight

gramming basketball plays and topics discussed in class.

Coach Knight spoke in parables of his life, using each story to reach a specific point. He asked how many of us did not like a coach at one point in our life.

Almost everyone in the room raised a hand. "As a senior in high school, I had a basketball coach that I hated," Knight said. "I learned as much from him as anyone else. I learned what to do as well as what not to do."

Coach Knight told us his four keys to victory were taking good shots, not throwing the ball away, moving without the ball and helping each other to get open. He told us you have to make a team rather than recruit one, and not to worry about the size of the player but the player's ability and heart.

"The first ingredient to winning is to eliminate the reasons to lose," Knight said. "The will to prepare is more important than the will to win."

At one point, Coach Knight recommended that the class read a book a week. More specifically, he recommended two books, *The Art of War*, by Sun Tzu and Mia Hamm's *Go for the Gold*.

Coach Knight taught us more about life than basketball. He told us mental is to physical as 4 is to 1, and that success was not a matter of luck. He taught us how to apply for a coaching or teaching job, with the promise of giving a coaching recommendation if a student received an A.

"The worst coaches are tolerant people, the best coaches are intolerant, because people that work for you are satisfied with whatever you tolerate," he said. "Telling people what they want to hear is fatal in basketball and in life."

As an A student, I asked for Coach Knight to speak to my rowing team instead of receiving a coaching recommendation. Crew was a first-year varsity sport at Indiana that many people didn't even know existed.

Coach Knight spoke to us after basketball practice one day before our last regatta of the fall season.

He told the rowing team "success is generated by the same thing built around effort, fatigue and stress, and that is what separated the player from the players who know how to win." He told us that simplicity and execution always beat surprise and chance, but learning the fundamentals in any game is the most important.

Some might think I put Coach Knight on a pedestal. I do not. I think he is a brilliant man who has made mistakes like anyone else. He says what he thinks and sometimes forgets to think before he speaks.

I can't imagine what it must be like to be constantly in the spotlight, without privacy, where the stakes are higher in a chess game of life. His reputation precedes him, rightly or wrongly, and people assume they know him based on how the media perceives him. Sometimes the answer isn't so black and white, but just a hazy shade of gray.



DallasNews.com/EXTRA

FANS GUIDE: Swipe here to access schedules, officials maps and more of Dallas/Fort Worth area teams events and venues.