

## "How Sports and Athletics Can Help OFF the Field"

What is the number one reason people get involved in sports? Love for the game? Play with friends? Fuel a competitive fire? The list can be endless. I want to share with you the reason that I started playing sports, or at least what I thought when I was a kid.

Before the advent of the Internet, when cable and video games were in their infancy, kids played. I mean they *played*...all day everyday. Not necessarily on organized teams, but in their backyards, at playgrounds, at local parks, for no real tangible reason. I remember being so skinny growing up because I had forgotten to eat due to my "addiction" to playing outside with my friends. Go to school, play until dark, go to bed and do it all over again! As I grew older, playing took on new meanings: I realized I was a decent athlete with good skills; the concept of winning and losing became very apparent; and more importantly I was growing up with sports as my platform.

As I graduated high school [when it was one Lakota!], and while attending Miami University, athletics became my driving force. It made into the person I am today by providing the tools to thrive in a world full of challenges. Sports, over the course of 15 years, have shown me discipline, self-confidence, focus, resolve and very high standards of living my life.

Of course, growing up, sports are associated with fun and playing. With each new level of competition, however, new facets of a person's makeup are exposed. Are you going to rise and meet those new challenges? Or let something else rise above you? Without the obstacles I faced while playing sports and being active, I would not be even close to the person I am today.

I hope to instill some of those same characteristics in the athletes that become part of the Adrenaline family. We know the power that sports can have on a young mind and the ability to transcend the playing field and forge an identity for the real game of life. I look forward to seeing you on and off the field.

Your fellow athlete,

Tony Poggiali