

Teamwork works wonders, both in sport and in life

FAITH IN SPORT

Mgr Vladimir Felzmann

Baseball legend Babe Ruth (1895-1948), who dominated his era like no one else, knew a thing or two about teamwork. His 54 home runs in 1920 were more than the next three players in his league combined. “The way a team plays as a whole determines its success,” he said. “You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don’t play together, the club won’t be worth a dime.”

Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company, and chief developer of the assembly line technique of mass production, also has words of wisdom. “If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.

“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is a success,” he said.

This is something the Nazis never mastered, and hence lost the war.

Our currently fragmented society has its focus firmly on the individual. A paradigm shift towards a Christ-like view of reality – with its Trinitarian and sporting emphasis on the ‘we’ – might do the trick in protecting family unity. Once people are alive in the Kingdom of God, they see everything through a new ‘unitive consciousness’, which cannot help but underpin a sense of wellbeing.

Team managers, as well as foolish parents, give orders. The great ones care for and nurture the players in their squad, the whole of their family. Loneliness is detrimental to health, wellbeing and thus performance on the field and in life. For hundreds of thousands of years, hunter-gatherers knew the importance of a team mentality for their survival.

“If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants,” acknowledged Sir Isaac Newton. Newton was an English mathematician, physicist, astronomer, alchemist, theologian, and author, widely recognised as one of the greatest mathematicians and physicists of all time.

H.E. Luccock (1885-1960), a prominent American Methodist minister and professor of Homiletics at Yale Divinity School, astutely commented that “no one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it.” Meanwhile, *Little Women* author Louisa May Alcott reminds us that “it takes two flints to make a fire.”

Steve Jobs, pioneer of the personal computer revolution of the 1970s



and 1980s, made it clear that “great things in business are never done by one person; they’re done by a team of people.”

Idowu Koyenikan, internationally acclaimed organisational consultant and author, wisely taught that “there is immense power when a group of people with similar interests gets together to work toward the same goals.”

Similar sentiments are expressed in this wise African Proverb: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

Harry Truman, 33rd president of the United States from 1945 to 1953,

spoke of the importance of humility. “It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit,” he said. I am convinced that Liverpool’s recent success is due to Jurgen Klopp’s insistence that team spirit is more valuable than big names.

New Zealand’s famed rugby union team, the All Blacks, hold the record for the longest run as the No. 1 World Ranked team, spending just less than three months short of 10 years uninterrupted at the top of the rankings. Behind the success is a team culture built on humility, unity, and a deep reverence for the black

jersey with the silver fern. Players are expected to embody core values that include “better men make better All Blacks” and “no individual is bigger than the team”.

Michael Jordan made it clear that, for him, “Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships.” His biography on the official National Basketball Association website states: ‘By acclamation, Michael Jordan is the greatest basketball player of all time.’

Another Jordan adage: “There’s no ‘I’ in team – but there’s an ‘I’ in win,” he added.

“Being a good teammate isn’t about recognition. I do it because it makes me whole and complete,” admitted Dwyane Wade, an American former professional basketball player. He spent the majority of his 16-year career playing for the Miami Heat of the National Basketball Association (NBA) and won three NBA championships, was a 13-time NBA All-Star, and 8-time member of the All-NBA Team. He is also Miami’s all-time leader in points, games, assists, steals, shots made, and shots taken.

“I don’t believe in team motivation. I believe in getting a team prepared so it knows it will have the necessary confidence when it steps on the field and be prepared to play a good game,” said Tom Landry, an American professional football player and coach who was the first head coach of the Dallas Cowboys in the National Football League, a position he held for 29 seasons. He was named NFL Coach of the Year in 1966 and the NFC Coach of the Year in 1975.

As you travel on through Lent, why not give some time to thinking and praying about how you can help yourself – and your friends (which, I hope, include your family!) – become more Trinitarian, uniting the ‘I’ and the ‘You’ into a ‘we’ – and thus up there amongst life’s top winners.



The All Blacks are arguably the world’s greatest single team, having dominated their sport for decades and having a run as World No 1 rugby nation for 10 years. Photo: pxhere