

WRESTLING WITH HUMILITY

When I entered Seneca High School in the fall of 1963 one of the classes I took during the first semester was a seventh-grade physical education course taught by Coach Ron Cain. During that semester the class was exposed to flag football, basketball, track, and wrestling as well as daily calisthenics. As the semester progressed all of us learned who in the class was proficient in certain sports. In my case I found that I was excelling in track as a middle distance runner. As for my classmate Doug Hatfield '69 it became apparent that he was far and away the best pound-for-pound wrestler in the class. The fact that Doug also was not lacking in self-confidence made him all the more dominating in the sport. Quick and deceptively strong, he won match after match against boys his own size.

But after awhile Doug's natural self-confidence began to evolve into a degree of cockiness. This posed a dilemma for Coach Cain as to how to give Doug an appropriate "attitude adjustment." And it was at this point that Coach Ron Cain, usually known for taking the direct approach on issues, decided to use a subtle method in dealing with Doug. So from that point forward Doug found himself wrestling against boys who were progressively bigger than he was. The hope was that the loss of a wrestling match would bring Doug's self-confidence to a more realistic level. However, Doug continued to win match after match regardless of the size of his opponent. I among others absorbed a loss to Doug on the wrestling mats. And after Doug defeated a boy named Berry Bouchee (who though not athletic was far taller and more broadly built than Doug), both Coach Cain and the class began to wonder if there was anyone who could topple Doug from his perch.

Finally Doug was matched up against Greg Frey '69. Like Berry Bouchee Greg was far taller and more broadly built than Doug. Greg was gentle in nature but did possess a degree of competitiveness and athletic ability. As the match began Doug again attempted to use his quickness and strength to gain an advantage. But this time the outcome of the match was far different. Greg Frey soon had Doug pinned to the mats and from there simply sat on him. There was absolutely no escape route for Doug and the end of the match found Greg Frey a decisive winner. Doug Hatfield absorbed two losses that day. The first was the loss of a wrestling match. The second loss was the loss of an excess amount of self-confidence which in turn allowed him to have a more realistic sense of his abilities.

During our 30- year class reunion in 1999 I had opportunity to reconnect with Doug Hatfield for a brief period of time. When I mentioned to Doug both his ability as a wrestler and his eventual loss to a much larger opponent he responded simply "I REMEMBER THAT!" in a way that indicated a life's lesson well learned. And as with Doug may we all have a realistic appreciation of both our abilities and the abilities of others. After all, both Coach Cain and Doug would insist.

Sam Denny
Class of 1969