

Going Down Together

Ready:

“Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up.” -- Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Set

The championship game of the tournament was going to be our last game together. We worked hard to get there. Being finalists in the last tournament meant a win was going to be nothing short of sweet victory.

From Day 1, my assistant coach (my wife) and I committed these boys to prayer. As a team, we prayed and shared devotions before every game and practice. Learning about and growing in FCA's Four Core (Teamwork, Integrity, Excellence and Service) were a top priority. We taught them that character is more important than performance and that the purpose of our lives is to glorify God in word, thought and deed. We loved our athletes dearly; no question about it.

When the whistle blew, we sensed something was off. We conceded an early goal, tightened the defense and fought hard to level the score but couldn't get it back. We finished in second place again!

Both our athletes and coaches were discouraged, the parents had a few things to say about the referee making some poor decisions and perhaps we let that get the best of us. Some of our boys were in tears and took the loss very poorly. As a coach, I felt like a failure. I should have called a timeout when I had the chance, and I should've been able to speak life into our team after the defeat—but I didn't. The next thing I knew, we were going home with our heads low.

What went wrong? We prayed together, we prayed *for* one another, and unpacked devotionals all season long! How could this have happened? This goes to show that the Apostle Paul was serious when he told us to “*be on guard*” ([1 Corinthians 16:13](#)).

Amidst the aftermath, my wife and I took some time to see if there was anything we could do to finish the season strong. We emailed the parents asking them to bring their sons to school the next day—about 30 minutes before their first class. We needed to be together one last time. We acknowledged that although the referee wasn't perfect, our character fell apart. After reflecting, we remembered the Four Core, unpacked one more devotional, left it in God's hands with prayer and finished our team meeting with one last cheer.

We are proud of that team and would take each player back in a heartbeat if we could.

Go

- What does it mean to rise and fall together as a team?
- What does it look like to finish strong even though you know you aren't going to win?
- Have you ever let defeat get the best of you? How did you react? How could you have reacted differently?

Workout

Proverbs 22:4; Proverbs 16:32; 1 Timothy 6:6

Overtime

"Lord, I admit that I am not very good at being humble in defeat. Help me to remember that You are with me—even when I lose. Help me to remember that my identity is not found in winning or losing but only in the person of Jesus Christ. Let the joy of the Lord forever be my strength. Amen."



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