

Remarks from Coach Daniel Gibber
Sunday, June 21st, 2015

Thank Yous:

- I would like to begin by thanking our parents and siblings, both those able to be here today and those who aren't here today for all of your love and support
- I would like to thank our Family & friends for taking the time out of your busy schedules to be here today. Your presence here today is much appreciated.
- The Rabbeim & faculty at MTA and especially the current MTA administration led by Rabbi Taubes & Dr. Taylor, as well as previous MTA administrations led by Rabbi Gottlieb, Rabbi Hecht & Mr. Sklar for all of their leadership and support over the years
- Rabbi Beitler: Our journey began in Long Beach way back in the summer of 1981, some 34 years ago, with the words "Lech Lecha Me' Artzecha". Along the journey I've known you as a camp counselor, coach, Athletic Director and now twice a Rebbe for Jonathan. Thank you for your support and leadership over the many years and for being a first rate Rebbe and role model for our son.
- Coach Dr. Jonathan Halpert who has been a dear friend and mentor to me going back to 1998, when I started coaching at MTA. I vividly remember when we sat at your desk in the YU athletic office in the spring of 2005 as we were preparing for our semi-final game vs. Ramaz while making a push for back-to-back championships. I came to present to you my idea for a new unconventional way of attacking an odd front zone. After hearing me out you looked at me and commented "now you've really arrived as a coach". Those words, the many

many discussions that we've had over the years about basketball and coaching, both on and off the court, as well as all of your support has meant a lot to me.

- Shuey Jacoby for going above and beyond and for spearheading this event
- The chair people of today's event, Rafi Halpert, Yossi Faber, Yosef Weinberger and Yisrael Feld. I thank each of you not only for the time and effort that you each put into this event but for the countless memorable moments that each of you gave me as a coach
- To the talented and dedicated Assistant Coaches I've had the pleasure to coach with over the years: Mark Wiesel, Ron Ganulin, Moshe Lerer, Yitz Rabovsky, Reu Berman, Akiva Wolk, Michael Gibber, Eytan Fox & Jeremy Neiss as well as to Jon Bandler to whom I served as an Assistant Coach.
- I would also like to thank all of my wonderful coaching colleagues across the country who we've competed with and many of whom I've formed close relationships with over the years. One of the great benefits to coaching over the span of many years is the lifelong friendships that you form with players, coaches and others that you meet along the way. Thank you.
- I owe a big thank you to each of our amazing children who enthusiastically allowed me to spend so many hours coaching over the course of their lives. I've been coaching at MTA since you were each in diapers! While I always made it clear that I would stop coaching the minute any of you would've asked me to, that was never the case. In fact our children were always on the journey with me, with the boys each spending much of time acting as ball boys in pre-game warm-ups, sitting on our bench for games wearing their own MTA jerseys and being behind

the scenes assistant coaches. Mommy and I love each of you and are so proud of you.

- Most of all, I owe everything to my best friend my wife – Amy. Along with our kids, nobody sacrificed on behalf of my many coaching hours more than Amy. It all started on a spring evening in the late 1990s while attending a JV playoff game that Michael was playing in. After listening to me comment on what the team should and shouldn't be doing, Amy blurted out: “you should coach, you would be good at it”. While I'm not sure you ever truly regretted saying those words, you have always been extremely supportive of me along this journey and along with the kids you have been mine and our teams' biggest fan. I love you and thank you for all that you do for us.
- I would like to thank the parents of all of the many student athletes that we've had the privilege to work with over the years. Thank you for entrusting your sons to us each season.
- Last, but not least I would like to thank each and every one of our student athletes that we've had over the years. It was you guys that we went on the journey with and it was you who put well over 100 hours of sweat into each and every season. I loved having the best seats in the house to watch each of you perform each night. Today is just as much about you guys and the journeys that we travelled together over the years.

352 games, well over 200 wins, over 100 losses, 2 Yeshiva League Championship seasons (1 as an Asst.), 6 trips to the semi-finals, 13 Saracheck Tournaments, 1,440 quarters, over 45,000 minutes played, roughly 500 practices, numerous games scouted,

game film watched, practices planned, Xs and Os diagrammed, thousands of strategy sessions, laughs laughed, tears cried players celebrated and consoled and literally tens of thousands of hours spent on this endeavor over 16 years, what has this journey meant?

To properly answer that question, allow me to read some excerpts from an article that I wrote in the spring of 2011, entitled: “Cherished Tales From The Yeshiva League Hardwood”:

“The real question though is what is the journey REALLY all about? Why does the fall and the onset of the yeshiva high school sports experience mark such an exciting and worthwhile time? Why do players and coaches spend literally hundreds of hours each season working, sweating, growing and building their teams? What is the real value in investing so much time, effort, sweat and tears just to be able to throw a round leather ball through a round metal ring one more time than the next guy? Better yet, why do yeshiva high schools condone and support it? What is the intrinsic value in spending so many hours mastering the intricacies of the pick and roll at the expense of an extra hour or study or Torah learning?”

History repeats itself again and again on this cherished journey that is yeshiva high school sports. While attending a recent event, I approached one of the teenaged attendees who happened to be a senior at another yeshiva high school in the NY/NJ area to ask him how the sunset of his senior year of high school had been going. The young man I was speaking with appeared to be in less than a jovial mood. Perhaps due in part to his knowledge of the fact that I am now into my bar mitzvah season coaching basketball in

the Yeshiva League, he felt comfortable giving me a window into what was on his mind. He proceeded to tell me that he had been a senior leader on his very strong varsity team that had somewhat unexpectedly been knocked out of the Yeshiva League's playoffs just days before, in what turned out to be a very exciting and close game in front of a large crowd. He proceeded to describe for me the ups and downs, the high hopes and dreams that he and his teammates had harbored all season, followed by the crushing and bitter disappointment suddenly brought on by the bounce of a ball, marking the exit from the postseason and from his teams' lofty dreams. He recounted the fact that he and his teammates had invested over 100 hours of their lives that year towards the goal of capturing the winner's circle and the championship crown. In light of the crushing and bitter final result that he and his team endured, he was suddenly questioning what it was all worth and why he made such a deep and unwavering investment in emotion and time in order to unsuccessfully chase a fleeting dream?

I must admit that after nearly two decades as a player or coach at the high school level, this had become an all too familiar topic to me. While the fact that the high caliber of players that I have often been fortunate to coach have afforded me the opportunity to partake in something that I never experienced in my playing days, two league championship seasons (one as a Head Coach and a previous one as an Assistant Coach), the stark reality is that I have still been on the receiving end of crashed hoop dreams and premature playoff endings far more than the reverse, both as player and coach.

I proceeded to sit the young man down to relay to him (and subsequently to his parents) my belief that he had just gained a priceless experience, something extremely meaningful

and valuable that he would certainly hold onto forever. Being that "misery loves company", I soothed his pain somewhat by reminding him that my very strong MTA Varsity had just followed a successful 13-1, division winning season in the Yeshiva League (21-6 overall), by falling soundly in the playoffs to the red hot SAR Sting (masterfully coached by my friend and our former MTA point guard, Rafi Halpert). I relayed to him my snapshot image of suddenly having found myself in the all too familiar post playoff locker room with the backdrop of 15 high school young men burying their faces in their jerseys and sobbing as they awaited my annual post playoff speech (I think I have that speech down pat by now!).

I then paused to share an observation with my young listener. I relayed to him my strong belief that for the vast majority of yeshiva high school athletes (in fact for the vast majority of high school athletes in general), their experience as members of a yeshiva high school athletic team marks the first time in their lives that they so completely and wholeheartedly throw themselves into and commit themselves so thoroughly to a cause and a common goal.

Naturally, most high school males are at the "macho" stage of their lives in which they avoid risk taking, certainly public risk taking, in order to avoid at all costs the possibility of failing while in the public eye. Yet it has always fascinated me to watch from my close up vantage point how high school athletes so readily check their "macho-ism" at the door and for the first time in their lives are willing to lay it "all" on the line, in the all or nothing pursuit of high achievement. While the reward for the lucky few is overflowing

satisfaction, the crushing pain for the overwhelming majority is joined by the unfortunate perception of publicly falling short of the goal.

For many, the yeshiva high school sports journey is also the first time that they truly experience being part of something far bigger than themselves. They are part and parcel of a greater cause where their very skills and personalities must properly mesh with others in order to build something greater than the sum of its parts. For many it is also the first time that they will experience the hurt and tears brought on by failing at something that they care so much about; at the same time a chance to bask in the glory brought on by the big wins and successes. It is the chance to chase dreams, to chase epic moments and the chance to give so much of themselves towards the common goal. It is the chance to cry, the chance to laugh, the chance to fall and the chance to rise yet again to fight another day. Yet all of it, both the tears and the laughs, the joys and the stumbles, are what “it” it is really all about.

Theodore Roosevelt once said:

"It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly,

so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat."

I would like to suggest that Roosevelt described both the very journey that is the yeshiva high school athletic experience, as well as the very real journey of life itself. I believe firmly in the idea that the ups and downs of the high school sports journey mirrors life itself and I try never to miss an opportunity to use the ups and downs of our seasons as teaching points for our players.

I will never forget the strangely depressing feeling that our 2004 undefeated (in the Yeshiva League, 21-2 overall) championship team felt at our post season awards dinner. While we were thrilled to have succeeded in achieving our ultimate basketball dream, we were depressed at the realization that our journey had come to an end and our players would be dispersing into various directions to take the next steps in their lives. It was then that it became apparent to us that it really is all about the journey and not about the destination. The journey itself is the ultimate reward, the trophy simply there as a testament to the path travelled.

The yeshiva high school sports journey plays an irreplaceable role in the lives of those who take it and it is those who "smell the roses" and recognize and cherish the deeper meaning of the journey that ultimately feel most fulfilled. In Hollywood, it is always the winner and the victor who is celebrated in the end. Unlike in Hollywood, the journey of real life and the journey of the high school athletic experience is paved with ups and downs, laughs and tears, successes and failures. Every aspect of the journey leaves the

traveler with life long lessons and memories to cherish. The journey itself is the reward and I am forever grateful to have the opportunity to travel it.”

That letter that I wrote 4 years ago sums up much of what and our teams have had the pleasure to experience and grow from over the past 16 years.

So why would I want to conclude this experience and embark on an entirely new journey?

As Kohelles famously teaches us, there is a time for everything in life and every season has it's time. At this stage in my life my passion and inspiration is pulling me away from coaching as I have a desire to spend more time at home with my family and watching my own children grow. I also wish to continue to devote myself to the growing demands of a family business. In addition, I have a new journey that now inspires me more than the Cherished Tales from the YL Hardwood. A couple of years ago, shortly after I undertook to attend Daf Yomi shiur at 5:30 am, my son Charles asked me one day why I would be so crazy to get up at 5am to learn Torah. It was at that moment that I realized that instead of coaching I am inspired to spend as much time as I can committing myself to Torah learning and to being the best role model for my kids as far as what's really most important in life. From one journey to the next it's always important to follow and commit to what most inspires you at that point in your life.

So I'm hereby happy to be handing the coaching reigns over to the next coach and I look forward to attending some games and rooting for the Lions in future seasons. Once an MTA Lion, you become a Lion4life! Thank you.