

First I want to thank the team for another great season on the mat. Wrestling is a passion for me and I watch it whenever and wherever I can. I travel all over the country to see it, but I never enjoy it as much as when I'm with this team. I enjoyed watching you improve and I enjoyed your company. You guys even called me coach a few times this year and you may have had a smile on your face but I took it as a great compliment. So as my way of thanking you, I took all of those pictures I shot this year, a copy of the web page and a few other things and made a CD-ROM. Then I burned copies for all of you. Thanks for a great year.

Now Coach Mooney I know you don't like it when people talk about you. You always want to keep the focus on the kids, all of the kids, whatever their achievement. But tonight you've had that opportunity so now you're going to let me talk about you. After all it may be my last chance.

Coach you are one of the biggest pessimists I have ever met . . . especially before a match. This year I made a few notes: Quote "Stockbridge is a lot stronger this year", final score 59-19. "Haslett is much improved", final score 56-18. "Fowlerville is the team to beat", final score 59-21. "I'm telling you Portland could win this league", final score 48-21. But you're also the eternal optimist. You see the good in every kid, be it a wrestler, a golfer, a scholar, or a kid in trouble. You've told me "you can't save them all" but I never saw a time when you didn't try. Why do you do it? "Because it's good for kids."

You are the greatest moocher in all of high school sports. Weather it's talking a hotel clerk out of an extra room or free roll-away beds, snatching a snack from the table of the competition, getting the mat guy to throw in an extra section for free, soliciting donations, or getting almost every restauranteur in Williamston to feed the team. But you're also generous almost to a fault. When a kid needs shoes or money for camp you find a way for that to happen. When the golfers need a hot chocolate or an extra plaque you charge it to the wrestling club. When a kid needs a little more of your time you always give it. Why? "Because it's good for kids".

Coach Mooney you are one of the most manipulative people I've ever known. I should know, I think I got manipulated right into being the webmaster of the Williamston Wrestling Club. Coach told me "this Internet thing is really cool, I think we should be on the web." Why did he choose to have this conversation with me, the guy who brings him printouts off the net almost every week. It was not by chance. It was because he is also one of the greatest motivators I've ever known. He knew I'd answer in my best Jim Mooney way . . . "No Problem". Just like he knows that his athletes will respond when he weaves a tale about a pair of red wrestling shoes, or when he tells a kid that ratty old letter jacket he just gave him once belonged to Williamston's first state

champ. Or all those little sayings: "Believe to achieve", "You need wrestling more the wrestling needs you", "If it will be it's up to me", "Yard by yard it's hard, but inch by inch it's a cinch". When all these things are put together I've seem it help ordinary kids do extraordinary things. Why do it? "Because it's good for kids."

Coach you're a very prideful person. You're proud of your family and their accomplishments. You're proud whenever a student does a good thing. You're proud it live in this country and to fly your flag. And you're proud of all the great accomplishments of your athletes. Many league, district, and regional titles. Forty-four state place winners. Two Class 'C' runner-up teams. A Division 3 state championship and nineteen individual state champions. That's a lot of things to be proud about, but as proud as you are you are also very modest. Like I said when I started you don't like it much when people are talking about you, and you talk about yourself even less. I've known you all of my life, after all you came here the year I was born, and it was just this year I heard you make reference that you were a State Champion at Niles High School. Why be so modist? It keeps the focus on the athletes and that's "Good for kids".

You also like to be a little exclusive. You like the fact that your team is wrestling or competing seven days a week. I don't know of any others who practice on Sunday. You're happy that your practices run nearly three hours, certainly longer than most. But you are also very inclusive. I've never seen you discourage a kid who wanted to be a part of your team. Parents are always welcome in the wrestling room as are other wrestlers who stop by to help. When it's time for the Classic you want everyone to be a part of it, moms & dads, boosters, graduates, middle school wrestlers and in a few cases every wrestling team you talked to in the past year. Why? "Because it's good for kids".

Coach Simmons said it well the other night. His boys are at Williamston because he believes in the values that you teach on and off the mat. The work ethic, the patriotism, the love of sport, and the one thing I've heard you say over and over "Right's Right and Wrong's Wrong".

You have been the heart and soul of this program and now that you're moving on we'll all work together to "Just get it done" but we still want you to stay a part of the program. Plan on getting calls for advice, golfing in the outing, stopping by when you're in town, and having Barb check out the web page so she can tell you about it. And, so you will forever be a part of wrestling here in Williamston every January we will host "The Jim Mooney Williamston Wrestling Classic".

Why? "Because it's good for kids".

