

Notes for an Athlete

Category: *Sundry Reflections*

There is a reality you enter in dealing with the adult world of sport: athletes, young athletes, young female athletes, successful young female athletes are enormously attractive creatures. They attract the attention of an array of contemporaries and adults, whose good will and urge to support and guide you is not always easy to distinguish from their more personal agendas, agendas which they often do not even recognize themselves. Often the energy flows your way; sometimes it is flowing theirs. You can sense which is the case and respond accordingly. And while you will naturally show appreciation for the attention you receive, it is never your obligation to take care of the feelings of everybody who has an idea for you. That is not always easy, but you get better at distinguishing knowledgeable support from emotional agenda. There is a lot of both, all very happily mixed together, in this sport we love.

Two good descriptions of athlete-adult relations come from Bryce Courtenay's *Power of One*.

“Doc taught me the value of being the odd-man out: the man[woman] who senses there is a collective sanity to humans and assumes the role of the loner, the thinker, and the searching spirit who calls the privileged and powerful to task. The power of one was based on the courage to remain separate, to think through to the truth and not be beguiled by convention or the plausible arguments of those who expect to maintain power.”

“I told him my fear of losing control of my destiny; how, because I had camouflaged myself so well, I seemed to be shaped and directed too much by the needs of others. How the power of one within me was being dissipated even though their purposes for me were not corrupt or ill-intentioned. On the contrary, their deeds came swaddled in the innocence of love. I was becoming powerless as those around me plundered my spirit with the gift of themselves.”