

A Creed of Dependability

By Des Moines Police Dept. SPO Brian Joseph

Be dependable. From the first day of the academy, throughout a career, and on all fronts of life, be dependable. Recruits hear it over and over again. Strive to be the best in knowledge, skill set, and overall function. That being said, rarely is one ever “the best.” However, strive and succeed to be dependable. THAT is attainable.

I’ve been in law enforcement for 14 years. I’ve had the privilege to serve as a night-watch patrol officer, a task force member charged with suppressing violent crime, a S.W.A.T. operator, and a robbery-homicide detective. Through those assignments, I learned what it truly meant to be dependable. Mistakes were made, lessons were learned, and development was achieved (and absolutely needed). Following those assignments, I was selected for what to me is the greatest privilege I could be given: recruit training officer.

Across six years in that assignment, I have trained over 170 recruits. Fourteen years of law enforcement and charged with many different assignments, I was and still am not “the best” in any capacity. Patrol officers, detectives, operators, shooters, instructors, and defensive tactics gurus would put me to shame with their skill sets. So, why was I so fortunate to not only have served in so many capacities, but also charged and trusted to instruct recruits? The simple answer is: I constantly strived to be dependable. That is past tense, to this day, I strive to be dependable.

For most in law enforcement, they find their discipline, their compass in an academy or in field training. My road to dependability started years before I was a LEO. The road of dependability started for me as a young athlete. A diamond of dirt and grass was my home. From the time I was able to walk all the way through college, baseball was my passion. I lived it, breathed it, sweated it, bled it, and loved it. I spent countless hours honing my craft. Coaches were not there to see my work, however, that didn’t matter. I wanted to be a solid teammate. I wanted to produce. So, I worked. Through that work, that discipline, I became a dependable teammate. I was a catcher. I was the second-string catcher on the best team in the state. However, my coach gave me the greatest compliment I would ever receive in my entire career: I have a short list of players I would go into any game with, I keep your pictures in my office, you’re one of them. I wasn’t “the best,” but I was dependable.

By the time I was playing ball in college, I was instructing young athletes between seasons. I had a knack for identifying the smallest imperfections in swings, fielding, throwing, and much more. I loved every moment of working with athletes. Do not mistake my word of love for

words of headshakes, frustrations, and disbelief. All those feelings, and more, were a constant part of instructing athletes. However, seeing “small victories” of success made it all more than worthwhile. Seeing success of an athlete, after hours of training, was the most rewarding part of life. Their smiles, their relief, and their CONFIDENCE, were my rewards for working with them.

My foundation was set through my time as an athlete. When I entered law enforcement, I looked at it as another ball club I was joining. However, the stakes were never higher. Losing a ball game meant another team scored more runs. Losing in law enforcement meant a fellow officer was seriously injured or died. Baseball was one of my greatest teachers, because I let it be one of my greatest teachers. Baseball taught me to persevere, work when nobody else was watching, and to be dependable for my team.

Shockingly, all those principles were those I needed to live by, to a higher degree, in law enforcement. I strived to be the best, it never happened. Not in any capacity. However, my FTO trusted me, my squad mates trusted me, and my supervisors trusted me. They knew I was flawed and not perfect. However, they knew I would never stop working, and I would always be there no matter what the circumstances. The job would get done. The corner would be covered, the paperwork completed, and the fight would be won. Be dependable. Strive to be the best, but with all you are, be dependable.

Stepping into a recruit training role, I expect nothing less from probationary officers. Strive to be the best. The chances of you being the best are not in your favor. However, what is in your complete control is to be dependable. The challenge of being dependable is that one can never stop elevating his or her performance. Being dependable is a mandatory assignment, one that cannot be neglected. There is no tomorrow, there is no I’ll do it later, and there is no I’ll do it some other time. Being dependable requires one to wake up early, stay late, and put forth 100% effort FOR THE TEAM.

Needless to say, there was an exchange of what sports gave me for being a LEO and what being a LEO gave me as a coach. I coached baseball and softball long before I was a LEO. However, each phase impacted another. Law enforcement highlighted a higher level of discipline than I ever thought possible as an athlete. Aside from conducting knowledge transfers to recruits, I realized that lessons learned as a LEO were the same lessons that young athletes needed to learn.

I jumped off the ledge and started a small LLC. I started training young athletes in fitness, skill, and, most importantly, in mentality. I called the LLC “Creed Athlete.” To me, a competitor needed to establish a creed, an undeniable, uncompromising way of life. The competitor needed to establish that creed not just on the field of competition, but in every piece of life.

They needed to learn to be dependable as sons, daughters, students, teammates, and future parents. Through all that adversity, no matter what the challenge, the fork in the road, the unthinkable, the question, there could always be a solution. All the athlete, the coach, the officer, the professional, the kid, or the parent would ever need to do is ask, "Is the decision I'm about to make going to make me dependable?" The answer to that question, in my experience and training, provides the path to the choice of undoubtable integrity. Be dependable and live your creed.

About the Author:

Senior Police Officer Brian Joseph is a 14-year veteran of the Des Moines Police Department and has served across several disciplines during his tenure with DMPD. For the past handful of years, he has been the officer in charge of training at the Des Moines Regional Police Academy during which he has facilitated the daily training for over 170 new recruits. Outside of his work at DMPD, SPO Joseph is a father, husband, coach and business owner. All of these "titles" have impacted his ability to see the common traits and attributes that lead productive recruits, service minded police officers, coachable athletes, and a loving environment at home.