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2024 Keynote Speech

“Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships.” This quote by Micheal Jordan, arguably the greatest basketballer to ever live, highlights how success does not happen solely through one’s own talent.

Throughout his career, Michael Jordan consistently emphasised how the unity and connection he had with his teammates, and the trust they shared, was fundamental to his extraordinary sporting career.

Good morning, Headmaster, Mr Angus, Dr Swann, Ms White, teachers and boys. Today I want to talk to you about how working with others, and caring for others in our School contributes to the success of everyone.

We spend a lot of time talking about culture in our School. The importance of unity, the importance of connection, the importance of being ‘as one’. But I wonder whether we really understand why. I suspect many of us are unaware of the impact others have on our own achievements, and perhaps feel confused about how a strong School community can help us with our own individual goals.

In the past, we have had First football teams, with a number of AFL players in them, individuals who were champions and yet, this never guarantees us a Premiership. One or two individuals do not make a winning side. It is only when we have everyone working together and playing their role that we can really become the best. And we all play different roles.

In a football team, each player is there for the special ability they bring. They all have different talents, but each one of them is essential to the team’s success. Everyone relies on each other to enable them to shine as individuals.

It’s the same with life. We cannot do it alone. Think of how many people who have contributed to your life so far. Your parents have nurtured you; your teachers have guided your learning; your mates have been with you through it all. Without them, regardless of how good or how talented you might be, you would not be where you are today.

Something that really highlighted the importance of others to me was two years ago, playing in First XVIII alongside my older brother. I’ll admit I feel like a pretty independent person and enjoy doing things by myself, however through that year I really started to understand the importance of having someone there for me, someone I could rely on and someone I could trust.

I knew my brother Luke wanted me to succeed. Being in Year 10, you come up against blokes twice your size which can be daunting. Even though I believed in my own abilities, it was having Luke’s support that led to my success – he made me feel confident, he highlighted the things I did well, and he gave me opportunities.

Luke was someone I was able to count on, and that feeling contributed to my enjoyment and achievements of that year. Celebrating the Premiership meant so much more because I was sharing it with him (and of course the rest of the team).

I still feel this sense of someone having my back even off the field. Every person at this School has a different role to play, and every person is important to help build and maintain the culture, which in turn supports us.

As you know, over the past five years or so, our School's VCE results have continued to improve, and we now rank as one of Victoria's top academic schools. But do you think that's just because we have a few academic champions? No. A couple of us haven't suddenly become more intelligent. What has happened is that together we have created a culture where academics are valued, and we work together to achieve this higher goal.

Most nights, we sit up in the Hancock Wing, work together and help each other out. That's not to say we are not competitive with each other, but overall, we know that the better we all go as a group, the better we all go as individuals and vice versa.

A different way of looking at it is the old saying: a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. In other words, we all have a role to play, and we all need each other. If one of us falls or is treated poorly by others, we all become weaker.

When our connection is strong, we can achieve anything. I get goosebumps when I see boys coming together to chant, getting to their mates' games on the weekends to support their fellow Tonners or putting their arms around someone who may have suffered a loss.

It's something so special, but so many of us take it for granted – we need to notice it and treasure it.

Finally, I cannot emphasise enough the impact a cohesive and supportive group has on your own success. It can push you to be your best, hold you when things are tough and teach you to be the best version of yourself you can be.

Success is sweet when you have someone to share it with. Let's continue to work, to be a school where we can all rely on each other, where each person feels safe to be themselves and from this we will continue to thrive.

Thank you.