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PRESENTS THE COACHING SERIES...

“A PANE IN THE GLASS”

*The letter that follows is one that a coach sent to his players who were about to play in their first national championship. He wanted to illustrate some of the intangibles that help a team perform in that type of competitive environment. He chose a real life experience to get his point across. Enjoy the story of “**The Squirrel Who Wouldn't Quit**”.*

BT

THE SQUIRREL WHO WOULDN'T QUIT

by Rusty Schieber

Ladies,

Earlier this summer we had the pleasure of watching a family of gray squirrels develop from tiny little babies into plump mature squirrels. Throughout the summer we saw them periodically as the entire troop would travel through the trees, but you rarely saw much of them, and you never saw them on the ground. As the summer turned to fall we got to see a lot more of them as they collected acorns in our back yard and scurried away to hide the nutritious seeds and store them up for the winter. They were mature at this time and freely traveled through the trees as well as checking out the lawn that was covered with the acorns. Every time you saw the young mammals they were busy running through the lawn, working, collecting food or chasing one another through the trees playing, a great life.

My wife Chari and I love watching nature's creatures through the glass panes of our sunroom. Turkeys, deer, squirrels and rabbits, as well multitudes of birds and the occasional raccoon and possum have traveled through our yard. Of all these creatures though, none are more fun to watch than the squirrels. Industrious little rascals, that is for sure.

Part of man's (woman's) responsibility on earth is to care for God's creatures. Chari and I love feeding the birds, while Chari loves feeding the squirrels. On the other hand, I DO NOT LIKE THE SQUIRRELS IN THE BIRD FEEDER!!!

Many weeks ago, I filled the bird feeder for the first time this fall/winter and all was well for about three days. On day four, there were the fat squirrels, no longer satisfied with the acorns that they had collected, sitting in the bird feeder eating my Striped Sunflower seeds. I understand that squirrels need to eat, and Chari likes to see them eat, but they are not going to scare away our birds from our feeder. The war had begun!!!!

I obtained some Teflon belting from work and affixed it to the wood 4x4 post to which our feeder is attached. I completed the task with confidence, knowing that the young gray rodents would not be in the feeder when I awoke the next morning. With pride and the feeling of victory I went to sleep that night, anxiously waiting to awake and see the feeder, squirrel free. At 6:30 AM the following morning I sprang from bed with the excitement of a 8 year old on Christmas morning, woke up my son Nick, who was instrumental in the project from the beginning, and we headed down the steps. As we came around the corner into the kitchen, to my total disbelief, ONE fat gray squirrel was very happily eating Sunflower seeds out of the bird feeder... How did he do that? I also noticed that the rest of the family, five more squirrels, were eating below the feeder and appeared very content to accept what they could pick up off the ground as was dropped from the feeder.

I chased that squirrel out of the feeder a dozen or so times that morning before I went to work, yet he always came back...interesting enough, over that same time, not one of the remaining five squirrels that had lived in that feeder over the past few weeks even looked up at it, very content with what seeds they could find on the ground. Five of the squirrels accepted the fact that they could no longer climb the post leading up to squirrel heaven, yet one of the squirrels did not accept the fact that the new barrier was just that, a barrier. He continued to concentrate on the reward, the Striped Sunflower seeds in the feeder above the barrier and worked on developing a strategy to get past that barrier. He took a huge risk and jumped as high as he could, hoping that he could grasp something, ANYTHING, that would allow his claws to sink into, and prevent him from sliding and falling back to the ground. He had no idea what was passed the barrier, but he took the chance and jumped. As it turned out, his risk and plan and execution of that plan were well rewarded when he finally found out how to overcome that

barrier. He found himself at the top of the world (as far as he was concerned) having all the seeds to himself!!!

This is a true story ladies. Not one point has been exaggerated or added. I will continue with the ending shortly, but I want you to stop and think for a minute. With respect to curling and your team and teammates, what have we set out to do? Barriers have been placed in front of us at times, and how have each of you reacted to that barrier? Have each of you even noticed the barriers as they popped up? What squirrel would you be...the single squirrel who would not accept the fact that a barrier had been placed between him and his ultimate goal, or the squirrels who accepted the fact that they could not achieve their goal and in turn settled for the fact of eating whatever was thrown down to them? You set your goal many months ago to WIN THE WISCONSIN STATE JUNIOR CURLING CHAMPIONSHIP AND ADVANCE TO NATIONALS. That opportunity will be presented to you in several DAYS. Many additional barriers are going to be put in front of you between now and Thursday, the last day of the Championship... opponents, mental mistakes, missed shots, nightly curfew, hanging with the other athletes or strengthening bonds among your teammates.

How will each of you react to these barriers? What reward lies beyond these barriers? Do you want to jump past these barriers or are you just going to be content with the scraps that you can find strewn around? The answer is up to you, the squirrel in the feeder is eating well...

Now for the rest of the story...

After watching that squirrel for some time, I saw how he was getting into the feeder, quite ingenious for a rodent whose brain is the size of the tip of my thumb. He was taking a huge risk jumping as high as he could and grabbing for whatever he could sink a claw into. I placed another barrier on the support post and I THINK that I now have the bird feeder squirrel proofed. Chari and I also went out this morning and spent \$40+ on a squirrel feeder and a variety of squirrel feeds. We love to see the creatures call our yard home.

Incidentally, our squirrel with the high goals was out there for hours this morning (prior to setting up the squirrel feeder) simply looking up at the feeder (seriously!). He would come to the feeder and stand up on his rear feet and just look up at the feeder. Then he would run to the nearest tree, a Maple, and climb it to perch on a branch and look the feeder over from there. Then

he would come back. This back and forth action went on for over an hour. This furry young mammal still does not accept the fact that his goal cannot be reached because of an additional barrier that has been installed. This squirrel has character, drive and class. This squirrel has something to teach all of us.

I CHALLENGE YOU TO BE THIS SQUIRREL!!!

4 days...

Godspeed,

Rusty

Coach Rusty's team did qualify for nationals as the runner-up in WI!

BT