

Matt's Message

What's Wrong With 2nd?

I was intrigued more than usual by the Super Bowl matchup this year. And now that's it's over, and it's about 5 months until trading camps open, I've been doing a lot of reflecting. Here's what I saw in the big game:

On one side you had Peyton Manning, who is one of the best quarterbacks to ever play. But it seemed like much of the conversation leading up to the big game was where does he belong in the conversation of best ever? I don't know why we feel the need to put together lists and rankings. I witnessed way too many analysts pointing out Peyton's failures or shortcomings, instead of paying respect to his impressive and long list of accomplishments. Teddy Roosevelt said the critic, who "points out where the doer of deeds could have done better", doesn't count. He must have been talking about this kind of nit picking. Also, a lot was made of Peyton's decreased ability now that he was almost 40 years old. I'd like to remind everyone growing old in the NFL is a luxury very few get to experience. Does it really matter where anyone thinks he falls on the mythical list of all-time greats?

The other side featured the Carolina Panthers. A team that, when it was all said and done, took the field 19 times this year and lost only twice. A team that exemplified what a "team" is supposed to be. They overcame adversity from injuries, they made each other better, they had fun and expressed more joy than any team I've ever seen (I love it when they hand the footballs to kids in the stands after touchdowns), and a bunch of their players are stalwarts in the community. And they lose the super bowl to one of the greatest defenses in the history of the NFL and many want to categorize their season as a failure. From flirting with an undefeated season, to starting a "dabbing" phenomenon across the country, it was a lot of fun watching the Panthers this year. Personally, I appreciated watching them as a parent because they have so many great players who are great role models for my sons and daughters.

My point is we are so quick to focus on imperfections. We have this mentality that if you don't win the super bowl then the season is a failure. I get it- it adds to the drama. But why don't we celebrate excellence? 5 MVPs, 2 super bowl victories, 18 year NFL career- Phenomenal. 17-2 record, MVP quarterback- tremendous.

We have to make sure our young people watching the games know that if you put forth your best effort, you don't ever have to hang your head in disappointment. And sometimes NFL players need reminding of that as well.