

Monday, June 27, 2011

Safe Haven

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Many of us have either reacted to or seen people react to fear, uncomfortable situations or the grind of daily pressures. I remember watching my daughters cover their heads with the blankets on the bed when they were afraid. Getting under the bed itself is a popular reaction in the movies. I never really understood why but that was a place where they felt safe from whatever was outside the covers, even if it was in the same room.

As adults, we have those places where we feel untouchable and it is comforting to know that you have that one place where you can go to feel safe; a place you come to know as your safe haven, where your mind can be at peace and free from distractions and pressures. This place is not a place produced through the consumption of alcohol or other mood changing substances. A place created through the consumption of mood altering substances does more than remove you mentally from the realities of your circumstances, but also the realities of life.

Athletes have a common place they call a safe haven. For me and many other athletes, our safe haven is the clubhouse. The clubhouse is a place where athletes feel isolated from the outside world realizing that it still exists, but remain unaffected by it for 2 to 4 hour of the day. For this short period of time, players can be exempt from the normal rules and pressures of the outside world and only those whom they choose may enter into this paradise of peace.

The clubhouse, unlike the covers or bed, is not a hiding place. It's a place where athletes can go to temporarily escape, gather their thoughts and be revived for the next day's challenges. It is shared by others who see it as that place and welcome fellowshipping with others in search of that common peace. Everyone who shares the clubhouse is not in search of that safety or therapeutic value that it provides, but they do respect the space and time it represents and understand its importance. Sports have progressed and so have the demand for more access to the athletes, forcing management to make the clubhouse more accessible to outsiders, mainly the media. Athletes are now looking to find refuge within their safe haven. Places, such as the player's lounge, weight room and training room which are off limits to everyone except players and management, become regular hangouts. Occupants of the clubhouse are annoyed when their space is invaded by outsiders; people they feel do not belong. The clubhouse is more than the work place. It is a safe haven and that's why it is guarded and protected with the strictest of rules. There are clubhouse rules, protocol and clubhouse etiquette that must be adhered to assure the sanctity of its existence.