



Maclay Families,

For those of you who know my family well, I am certainly not the biggest sports fan who resides in the Milford household. Angie played basketball for Auburn University and stays tuned in with a broad range of teams, Clayburn can name each race and race time of Steve Prefontaine, and Kennan knows more than seems reasonable about receivers in the SEC and ACC right now. I tend to worry about school culture, caring for my faculty, and moving the school forward.

As I was doing some research on how the education landscape is changing and trying to quantify how the preparation for our Prekindergarten students will be different than this year's graduating seniors, I came across a familiar name, Tommy Lasorda.

I grew up in North Atlanta, and for better or worse, the Atlanta Braves is my home team. Dale Murphy, Phil Niekro, and Terry Pendleton are names I remember well. The Braves had some bad years, but also some good ones. One thing remained consistent, Tommy Lasorda and the Los Angeles Dodgers standing in their way for the World Series. Lasorda was the Dodgers' manager for 20 years and won almost 1,600 games and two World Series Championships along the way. He was certainly a formidable opponent.

Regardless of my mixture of disdain for him decades ago, and my respect for him now... he was a distinguished leader, and he can teach us something today. Tommy Lasorda once shared, "The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a persons' determination."

Determination is a key factor in success today and something I see in so many corners of our Maclay community - Seeing some of the faces return from CVC this week that I haven't seen since March. Watching the tenacity of our Event Team, ensuring that despite the restrictions, our Honor Code Signing took place and the tradition held. The team of faculty and students approaching and planning Homecoming to make sure that regardless of a pandemic, our community will celebrate our alumni and our yearly Fall traditions as safely and fully as possible. My teachers are expanding their tool belt with our model of in-class and on-line instruction so that EACH student, regardless of location has access to the connections that make the Maclay education special. Last, but certainly not least, my students, who are relentlessly determined to be themselves, figure it out, and stay committed to building their advantage. We will never stop working to help them find their success, their path, and to become their best selves. What better end goal to our combined determination?

That all sounds good, but what happens with it goes wrong. When the sadness, confusion, anxiety, and stress come? First, I would not characterize these conditions as

things 'going wrong'. Life is not full without a range of emotions and thoughts. Life is hard. As parents, we want to protect, but part of protection is preparation. Mark Frost wrote about a mindset of accepting the good with the bad, "For instance, there is no light without darkness—and this troubles many of us—but without it, how else would we tell one from the other? We spend half of every day in darkness; surely, we should make our peace with this."

I'll go ahead and step away from this philosophical leaning of that last thought and point to how we address it at Maclay. Beyond simply saying that "we have guidance counselors", I want you to know that we have a team here on campus that spends their waking hours asking how they can take the best care of each of our students. We added staff this year specifically to be able to be there for our students when they need us as well as being proactive during a time when isolation is a greater reality than before, and uncertainty is a new constant. As parents, if we all pause and look past the highlight reel of our childhood and adolescent years, we will remember them to have difficult scenes and be lonely at times.

At Maclay, we feel this reality deeply, and we have a heightened sense of responsibility in these uncommonly uncertain and stressful times. You will see additional resources coming out soon from our Guidance Office on stress, anxiety, mindfulness, and how to build a healthy balance throughout the various stages of maturation. At one time or another, we all need some encouragement, a redirection, or simply someone to listen and let us know it is all going to be okay. You do this as parents; we are right here beside you to do it as well.

You hear me all the time talking about how our partnership together will benefit your child the most. We are committed to enjoying the celebrations with you as well as being there in the times when life seems to be testing what we can bear. We believe as the British historian Richard Evans did, "It is often in the darkest skies that we see the brightest stars."

Be well over this long weekend. We have one quarter of the year in the books, and the success we have had is because of you and how hard you have worked. Thank you for the trust, the sacrifice, the well wishes, and smiles along the way...yes, even behind the masks.

Yours,

James



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