

PRACTICE

Building Character Through Soccer



Accountability:

Willingness to accept responsibility for one's own actions

Synonyms: responsibility, answerability

Accountability Story

There are very few programs in collegiate athletics that have ascended to the level of the UNC Women's soccer program. Between 1982 and 2014, a span of 34 years, the team has earned 21 NCAA National titles including an amazing 15 during an 18 year span between 1982 and 2000. Shannon Higgins, Kristine Lilly, and Mia Hamm all contributed to a dynasty that continued for more than two decades. But it was another great player, Cindy Parlow, and her reaction to adversity that reminds us of how accountability can shape our character. Cindy, a four-time All-American and two-time Hermann Trophy winner (awarded annually to the best male and female college soccer player by the Missouri Athletic Club), is certainly one of the best female players ever to wear the UNC uniform. In her freshman year in 1995, Cindy was instrumental in the success of a North Carolina team that entered the National Semi-Final with a perfect 25-0 record. Leading up to that game vs. Notre Dame, the UNC program had recorded nine consecutive National Championships and had only lost two games in a decade. In that game however, Cindy, in trying to clear a ball sent into the box by Notre Dame, headed the ball into her own goal. The game ended 1-0 with Notre Dame winning and Cindy was devastated because not only did the team lose the game but also a chance for ten consecutive NCAA titles. In the post-game press conference, Cindy, with tears in her eyes, took responsibility for the loss and that she was to blame for the result. Cindy did not make excuses or deflect criticism, but instead stood tall in facing some very difficult questions when she was the most vulnerable.

Anson Dorrance, 7-time NCAA National Coach of the Year, has coached the Tarheels since inception and has amassed more than 700 wins and has also coached many of the best players in the history of US Women's Soccer. Anson said of the incident in his book, *The Vision of a Champion*, "Seeing that exchange, I know that her whole life she (Cindy) had always taken responsibility up to that moment. And from that day forward, I knew she always would. It was one of the best examples of victory in defeat that I've ever seen in my life." By publicly accepting accountability for her performance, Cindy Parlow had demonstrated great character. She had not ended a dynasty, but instead revealed in a moment, that personal commitment to high performance and accountability was one of the underlying reasons for UNC's longstanding success.

