

## **George Cooper – Remarks at UKC Athletics’ Awards – March 28, 2015**

Only at King’s could a President come to an annual sports award dinner making references to the constitution of ancient Athens and expect to be understood.

You will recall from FYP that in those days people who refused to take part in society were known as “the idiotes” – the ancient Greek word from which we get our modern word idiot. And if you didn’t participate in the civic life of Periclean Athens you were stoned.

You are definitely not idiotes. You have participated heart and soul in the life of King’s. Mind you, I’ve been told that later on tonight you will be going to Pacifico’s Tavern. So just because you are not idiots doesn’t necessarily mean you won’t get stoned.

What is the purpose of sport? Switching from Greek to Latin, we all know about “mens sana in corpore sano” – a sound mind in a sound body. That’s one purpose of sport. But it’s so much more. It’s about heart – striving to be the best. It’s about playing by the rules. It’s about teamwork. It’s friendship and citizenship. In short, sport is about life.

In our modern world, a large part of life is just looking the part. But sport only cares about what you can do, not how you look. Sport is a meritocracy where results overcome the bias of human judgement. Sport builds prediction, builds dramatic tension and strikes the chord of patriotism – my sport, my team, my college, my country. This is the magic of sport, because sport is all about courage, honesty, leadership in a world that often falls short.

Thank you for the honour you bring to King’s by keeping before us the eternal ideals of courage, honesty and leadership.