

I. **Introduction and background**

- A. **Coaching and playing experience.** As a coach I've coached at the semi-pro, high school and pro levels. As a player I played high school, Division I college, semi-pro, pro (in three leagues) and I experience coaches and schemes across the spectrum.
- B. **Coaching mentors** (During a three year period I played for what I call the Mt Coachmore of Coaches George Allen, Tom Landry, Chuck Fairbanks and Marv Levy). From my coaching mentors I learned the value of connecting with players, identifying skills sets and incorporating them into your scheme and getting players to buy-in.

II. **Connecting with players**

- A. **Why I ask players to right goals.** Each year I ask players to write out 5 goals, the goals can be football, academic or just plain life experience related. I started doing this after my first year coaching the Chicago Thunder a semi-pro team. It was a very frustrating year, mainly because we lost, and looked very bad doing so. As we were getting drubbed the last game of the season I realized I my players might be playing for different reasons than I was coaching and different reasons than why I played. So I thought to better understand and coach the players I needed to understand what they were after.
- B. **Players writing their obituaries** (Joe Ehrman Gillman Academy Baltimore). I'd read the book 'A Season in Life' by Jeffery Marx that he wrote about Joe Ehrman, Joe and I played together with the Chicago Blitz. Joe had his players write what they would want their obituary to be, on its face it seems like a grim exercise, however when applied the way Joe applied it, you have to live the life that you want to be remembered for. To be seen as a good teammate a hard worker you must be a good teammate and hard worker so he was getting players to live their end game.
- C. **One on one talks with players.** You have to talk with the players. I remember Alex Agase my college coach just coming up to me during a practice and talking with me. I wasn't a recruit I was a walk-on that had to tryout, but he wanted to make that connection, I think it's because he saw something in me. Coach Allen would talk with his players one on one I remember him asking me into his office (Hotel Suite) after cut down day with the Blitz in '82. I was scared that they were about to make one more cut. Coach Allen sits me down he says "May, you got potential." I start beaming, imagine George Allen the father of modern defense, Mr. Over the Hill Gang, Mr. the Future is Now, he says I have potential! Then the other shoe drops, "You know what potential means?" Coach Allen asks, he doesn't wait for me to answer, "It means you haven't done shit yet!" Stunned I leave the meeting with the understanding that Coach Allen expects more from me because I can do more. Even though I wasn't a starter I worked

hard in practice because my abilities dictated it. Later I read Jennifer Allen's, Coach Allens only daughter, book, the Fifth Quarter where she related how her dad would complement a player before a critique. His thinking the complement would make the player an active recipient of whatever the following criticism was. Even after moving onto New Jersey that '83 season I would go all out in practice. This impressed Coach Fairbanks even if my size didn't. On the Blitz roster I was listed as 6-4 240 lbs. Well by mid-season when I'd reached New Jersey I was still 6-4 ish but my weight was 219. Coach Fairbanks after one practice chatted with me about the next season. He wasn't going to sign me for the '84 season but with an expansion draft he was going to wait until after the draft so he wouldn't have to protect me and he wouldn't risk losing me to another team. Coach Fairbanks with his arm on my shoulder, "You're kinda light in the ass, we'd like you to gain a little weight, not too much though because your speed is what makes you special." That talk sent me into the off season exciting about returning to New York. Unfortunately J. Walker Duncan sold the team to Donald Trump who fired Fairbanks and Marc May as the receiving TE in a two TE system never materialized. Years later (2007) at Darryl Stingley's funeral I walked up to Coach and he readily remembered me, the connection lasted almost 25 years.

- D. **Seeing the football experience thru the player's perspective.** I try and view the football experience as my players do with them in my mind I approach things with how I viewed things as a high school player. There are different ways to motivate players understanding the players' mindset allows you use the triggers that get results. Year one at St Laurence during a practice my one semi-healthy running back was angling to shut it down, I admittedly cajoled him to give me 10 more minutes, just 10 minutes. My head coach over the headset was miffed. My response was I was just trying to get thru the practice by any means necessary. Yelling and threatening probably wouldn't have worked since I didn't have a plan B, another player to put in to motivate via competition. One can't give ultimatums of the next man up if there is no next man. The kid finished the practice, mission accomplished.

III. **Identifying player skill sets**

- A. **Judging players abilities.** Identify what players excel at and put them in position to succeed. It's not the system it's the relationship and skill sets. Once again year one with St Laurence in the post season moratorium I cited a player that was not a tough inside runner and we were at fault for asking him to do something he wasn't going to do, we didn't have another option at the position and putting the kid in the doghouse because he wasn't what we wanted well you're not going to get accomplished what you want just by being stubborn. A coach's goal; exploit your players strengths, hide your players weaknesses.
- B. **How a player fits into what you do.** At Purdue they tried to make a Gary Danielson an triple option QB well they went 6-5 with first rounder's Darryl Stingley (#19), Otis

Armstrong (#9), Dave Butz (#5 player drafted), 2nd Rounder's Steve Baumgartner and Gary Hrivnak, 4th rounder Gregg Bingham. Gary later joined them in the NFL, player 11 seasons. Maybe a pro style pass offense would have served Purdue better. Fast forward to 1977 Mark Herrmann running a pro offense Purdue went to three bowls in four years. Having a good scheme helps, having the right players with the right skill set is what makes you a 'genius'. The Bears '85 team with its pressure defense was special because of the great players using their talents.

- C. **Recruiting players.** Connecting with the players talking to them explaining what you expect and I lean on lessons learned from Coach Allen I mention something positive about them before I critique and I mention they will have opportunities to play no guarantees of starting and such. I will cite past players that have succeed and how I want ALL my guys to be successful and have a positive experience. One thing that resonated with Tom Landry was his opening camp speech to the rookies in 1982. He talked not about Roger Staubach, Bob Lilly, Bob Hayes, Cornell Green, All Hall of Fame performers. Instead he talked about Mike Wilson a receiver he'd cut the year before that caught on with the 49ers, the same 49ers that beat the Cowboys in the NFC Championship game that January. For Coach Landry; players being better for having been in his program; is what mattered most. I do what I do so guys get better and I make sure players know that them; getting better as players and more important people is what matters most to me.

IV. **Getting players to buy in**

- A. **Appealing to human nature, we are all selfish.** One must understand that it's human nature to be somewhat selfish. So presenting the benefits of team first as how you the individual benefits. My goal as a Coach is for each player to succeed.
- B. **Showing how the individual benefits from group success.** You have to get the player to see that working for something larger than oneself can bring personal rewards. The best high school practice I participated in was my senior year at South Shore. We practice Thanksgivings day morning because we had a championship game Saturday at Soldiers field. It was cold, there was snow, it was a holiday but we had a chance to be CHAMPIONS! I always tell my player that was one of the best experiences I've had as a football player. The key is it takes hard work it takes working together. The players and coaches working in concert.
- C. **Rewarding selfishness (Mauricio Garibay Player of the week for his job as scout team QB vs Mt Carmel).** Our prep for Mt Carmel our defensive coordinator decided the scout offense would not use a football so our defense would chase the ball but execute their assignment, when defending the option executing the assignment and not chasing the ball is what's important. Mauricio Garibay was our scout team quarterback and this kid got hit EVERY play as our linebackers executed their assignment. Mauricio didn't

complain, didn't back down just did his job to make us better. We won and Mauricio Garibay was a big reason why.