



# Forty-One Years of Coaching Football Have I Learned Anything?

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I was born into a football family. My dad Ben, Uncle Pete, and older cousin Bob, were all high school and college football coaches. When I began as an assistant coach at Eaton High School in Eaton, Ohio in 1964, I sure didn't know the adventure that was in front of me. Since that day, I have coached football at three high schools and seven universities. I've been a head coach, defensive coordinator and position coach. I have served as an assistant for four great men and one not so hot. I have worked with hundreds of assistant coaches and most are still my good friends. I have been fired three times and hired to good jobs ten times. So, I am way ahead. I have been able to practice what I preach to my players...perseverance. "Stick with it." "Never give up." "Hang in there." You know what I mean. I have been in a lot of huddles.

The question is, have I learned anything. The answer is yes. However, I seem to know a lot less now about the game than I did when Glen Mason and I were coaching for Dave McClain at Ball State University in 1972. We didn't have all the answers, but we had most of them. Anyway, here are a few things I have learned over the forty-one years.

1.) The players that we all get to coach are terrific. I have detected very little change in them since 1964. They are bright, motivated and hard-working. The best thing about my job has always been the kids. When I finally hang it up, they are what I will miss the most.

2.) If the kids are the best, what is the worst? The absolute worst thing about coaching is losing. It's a shame, but it's a fact that half the football teams lose every Friday night and Saturday. As a coach, you better be able to handle losing or you won't last. I know you plan on winning them all, but it is not going to happen. Some of your best coaching jobs will result in losses and losing seasons. You must be like your players, though and resilient.

3.) Remember, you are a football coach, not a brain surgeon. You are coaching a game that is supposed to be fun for everyone involved, including you. Don't take yourself too seriously. Laugh, smile and have fun with the kids. A sense of humor will

take you a long way. As coach Mason likes to tell us, "life is not a dress rehearsal." That is it. Speaking of Coach Glen Mason, another thing I have learned the past five years is that he is one of the best coaches in America. Minnesotans are very fortunate to have him leading our football program.

4.) Beware of the "coach killer." He is one who looks good. He is the one with great potential. He is the big, fast, strong kid who works hard in the weight room. He is the player you "got to get on the field," but every time you do, he gets you beat. Do not let the "coach killer" get you. You are better off with the slower, smaller, weaker kid that plays hard and smart.

5.) Your children are more important than your football players and your coaching job. Too many of us coaches cheat our own children because of time spent with other people's kids. When I was a young coach, there were times that I had my priorities screwed up. Don't make that mistake. Make sure you are in the front row for that play, dance recital, little league game, soccer match and parent-teacher conference.

6.) Stay away from the "know it alls." This is the coach that knows everything about everything. He has all the answers and his way is the only way. Believe me, there are no geniuses coaching football. This is the same guy who will take all of the credit and none of the blame. I read a quote in the newspaper yesterday from a famous "know it all" guru. Listen to this crap....."I have no one to blame but myself for coaching the way I did in the NFL...I delegated a whole bunch of authority to the assistant coaches." Avoid this type of coach, he will make your life miserable.

7.) Finally, you have all heard people say, "It's better to be lucky than good." I don't know if that is true, but I am sure that luck is a factor in our jobs and lives. I have been very lucky these past forty-one years. I will give you one god example. A football coach needs a good coach's wife. he is lucky to have one. I have had two! How did I get so lucky? I wish you that same type of luck and go have fun coaching football.