

# Success is Found Within a Focus on Leadership

## **JOHN CASSELLIUS, Winona Winhawks Head Football Coach**

### **Education**

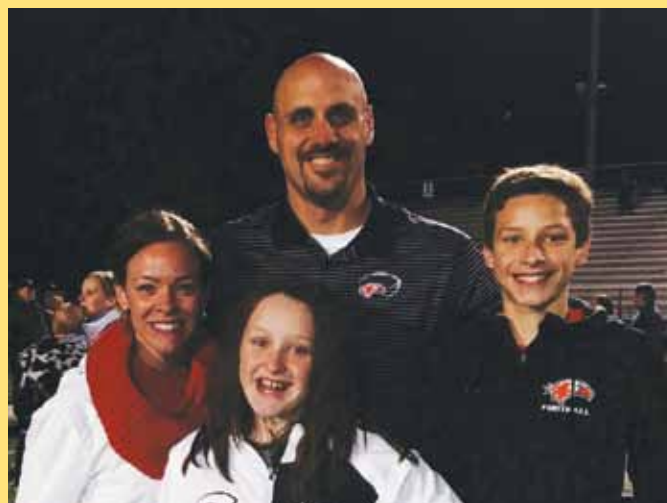
2006-2008 ..... Master of Education Teaching and Learning, Saint Mary's University, Winona, MN  
2006-2007 ..... Health Major, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, MN  
1996-2001 ..... B.S. in Health & Human Performance (K-12 Certification), Minor: Health Education & Coaching University of Wisconsin – River Falls, River Falls, WI

### **Teaching Experience**

August 07- Current .. Winona Senior High School ..... Winona, MN (9-12 Physical Education, Health Education, and Weight Training)  
August 05-June 07 ... Winona Middle School ..... Winona, MN (5-8 Physical Education and Health Education Teacher)  
August 03-June 05 ... Hill-Murray School ..... Maplewood, MN (8-12 Physical Education and Weight Training)  
August 02-June 03 .. Achieve Language Academy ..... St. Paul, MN (K-8 Physical Education and Health)

### **Coaching Experience**

2005-Current ..... Head Football Coach, Winona Senior High School, Winona, MN  
- 2016 AAAA Coach of the Year  
- 2016 Big South East Blue District Coach of the Year  
- 2016 Section 1 AAAA Coach of the Year  
- 2016 All Start MFCA Coach  
- 2015 Big South East Blue District Coach of the Year  
- 2008 Big 9 Conference Coach of the Year  
2005- 2014 ..... Assistant Co-ed Track Coach, Winona Senior High School, Winona, MN  
1999-2004 Seasons .. Defensive Coordinator, Varsity Football, Hill-Murray High School, Maplewood, MN  
2001-2005 Seasons .. Head Co-ed Track Coach, Hill-Murray High School,



Maplewood, MN

2002-2005 Seasons .. Freshman Girls Basketball, Hill-Murray High School, Maplewood, MN

1999-2000 Seasons .. Assistant Co-ed Track Coach, Hill-Murray High School, Maplewood, MN

1997-98 Seasons ..... Co-Head Coach Boys Basketball, Spring Valley Middle School, Spring Valley, WI

1996-97 Seasons ..... Assistant Girls Basketball Coach, Skyview Community School, Oakdale, MN

1998 Season ..... Volunteer Varsity Football Coach, Glenwood City High School, Glenwood City, WI

### **Family**

My wife, Emily, and I have been married for 15 years. Emily is a third grade teacher in Winona Area Public Schools. We have two kids. Bryan is 12 and Molly is 10.

Leadership amongst a football team must go beyond the coaching staff for a team to be successful. Every football season I am deliberate about setting players up to lead the team. The end of a football season always brings a new group of young men that are eager to lead. Varsity players vote for three or four juniors that will step up to lead as seniors. This group of players are considered our "Planning Committee" during the off- season.

As we all know, the football season is year-round. I believe it is important to include players in all planning that takes place

between seasons. During the winter and spring months our Planning Committee works with the coaching staff to create a slogan or quote for the upcoming season, plan summer camps and activities, plan the summer leader outing, and act as a sounding board between players and coaches. This committee also helps design and choose the apparel that will be available and they help create the team t-shirts that has the year's slogan or quote on the back.

As we approach the upcoming season, I extend the Planning Committee to a group of eight seniors that will serve as team

leaders. At the end of our team summer camp, any player that will be a senior has the opportunity to apply to be a leader. The team and coaching staff choose leaders by voting. Players and coaches vote for players they feel have shown leadership qualities at camp, in the weightroom, and outside of football. I believe that leaders play a very important role in the cohesiveness and success of a program, both on and off the field. These eight leaders have much responsibility placed upon them, therefore, the leaders must be of upright character and willing to accept the challenges they will face as leaders of our football team.

Once the eight leaders are chosen, they must each sign a contract. The contract states that it is an honor and a privilege to have been selected as a leader. Leaders must sign the contract agreeing that: A Leader:

- Is an extension of the head coach to the team. In this role, the leaders will help mediate concerns and ideas between the team and the coaching staff.
- Will stand up for our team and our program in all situations.
- Will demonstrate exemplary character in all areas of life.
- Is committed to the furthering of the football program and will work with younger football teams to foster pride and enthusiasm for their football experience as well as the varsity football program.
- Will organize team events and be responsible for maintaining a chain of communication among teammates.
- Is willing to keep team morale as a priority and take steps to boost enthusiasm and morale when necessary.
- Will make tough and possibly unpopular decisions in the best interest of our football program.
- Will commit to leaving our football program in better condition - with a deepened tradition - than before.
- Understands that failure to consistently fulfill responsibilities, or engaging in behavior detrimental to the football program, may result in the revocation of his position as a leader.

In addition to agreeing to the above, leaders must commit to attending our summer leader outing. The eight leaders and the coaching staff attend this outing. The purpose of this 3-day event is to build relationships, train on leadership, experience serving others, work together as a team, learn how to compete against each other, and show support for each other. This outing takes place at a cabin. It is incredible to watch relationships grow and bonds form between teammates in such a short amount of time. Amazing things happen around a campfire, on jet skis, and while sharing meals together. Leaders are partnered up and each partnership is responsible for a meal. They bring enough ingredients and prepare that meal for the others. One

of the highlights of this outing every year is a scavenger hunt we do. At the end of the scavenger hunt, the leaders find a letter from their parents. I ask parents to take time to write a heart-felt letter to their son highlighting strengths and acknowledging how proud they are of their son. This is always a memorable moment for each leader.

After this memorable outing, the leaders are always incredibly excited to get the season started. During the season, the responsibilities of a leader include communicating, facilitating, and decision-making. Leaders are expected to serve as communicators between coaches and teammates, facilitators of meetings and problem-solving situations, and help make decisions on various things as they arise. Leaders rotate as captains for games and are responsible for deciding who will be captains each week.

I have found that allowing players to take ownership of the team and some of the responsibilities that come with that has played a part in the success of our team. A sense of pride for being a Winhawk football player is felt, and it wasn't always that way. Earning the title of Team Leader is not taken lightly and is respected amongst the team. This has helped in building strong team morale. The young men on our team take leadership skills with them far beyond the football field. My hope is that these skills help them experience success in all areas of their life. ■