

**CREATING A CULTURE OF VALUES THAT WILL PROMOTE SUSTAINED  
EXCELLENCE IN COMPETITIVE FOOTBALL**

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## ABSTRACT

Coaches in highly competitive football programs at the collegiate level are often under immense pressure to produce winning programs for the institutions that they represent. Further, the expectation that winning will occur quickly is continually increasing, making the organizational and cultural decisions that the coach must make more critical in nature from the outset of his tenure. Consequently, often coaches in programs of this nature will look for the “quick fix”, seeking to develop the on the field skills that will promote performance while ignoring the development of the off the field skills that will promote long term moral growth in the participant.

It is the contention of this document that by seeking long term moral growth in the participants, the coach will enhance the opportunity for a culture to develop and sustain excellence. This study examined the perspectives of ten practicing Head Coaches in college football; nine of whom coach at the Division I level. Their perspectives regarding competition, belief systems and missions, and mental toughness were solicited. Their responses were compared and contrasted with the theoretical frameworks that exist in the literature on the aforementioned topics. A working model of how an idealistic perspective as a theoretical framework might be practically applied to assist coaches is presented in the concluding chapter. This is done with the intent of transforming the virtue oriented perspectives that practicing coaches might well possess; however, are unable to actualize.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Leadership in Football: Identifying the Key Ingredients to Cultural Development

#### *Introduction*

Competitive football cultures are designed to create winning programs for the institutions that they represent. In doing so, they often neglect to develop the values that are necessary to build the relationships that will promote participant personal and collective development. The moral values of responsibility, respect, integrity, justice/fairness and beneficence must be sought by all in the quest for human and cultural excellence. Further, the understanding of the concept of competition as it applies to the acquisition and practice of these values must be considered by the participants and leaders of these cultures. Competition must be considered as a value driven process rather than as an exercise in which values are conveniently employed in the process of searching for victory. The culture must see the process of becoming competitive as synchronous with value acquisition rather than as dichotomous. It is incumbent upon the leaders of these programs, the coaches, to provide the leadership that will spur value laden moral growth to facilitate this process. It is here that true self-confidence may be developed. When the community begins to develop respect for one another that is borne from consistent display of personal and collective moral responsibility, the galvanizing force of trust provides the cornerstone for the emergence of true self-confidence for the group. To establish this process, a leadership methodology that is follower focused and intent upon the development of quality individuals first and quality players second must be chosen. By examining their own philosophies and belief systems, and creating and

actualizing value driven missions leaders should be able to build a foundation for participant growth and performance improvement. However, theory does not always follow practice.

Why are some football team cultures successful and why do others fall short of achieving their goals? While success may be defined in many terms, the bottom line growth in football cultures must ultimately be reflected on the scoreboard. To achieve this practical outcome, the leadership must consider their personal philosophical inclinations, in relation to success however defined. Deliberate reflection must be undertaken to identify the underpinnings of their belief systems. Determining what drives their passion relative to creating an environment which will allow all the members of the group, including coaches and players, to manifest their potential must be of paramount concern. Passionate people are driven to achieve at a higher level for a sustained period of time far beyond those who are not so inclined (Collins, 2001). In attempting to practically improve, the coach must constantly check himself and his team within the framework of the practical philosophy that they have established. By examining their personal and coaching belief systems and creating and actualizing value driven missions, the leaders of these programs can build a foundation for growth that will provide an opportunity for consistent moral growth and performance improvement for their participants.

### *Setting the Problem*

Football coaches at the collegiate level are always looking for coaching philosophies and methodologies that will help them develop winning programs. If the coaches fail to 'make this happen' within a limited amount of time, they are usually

replaced. The pressure that this places upon the coach to win and win early often puts them in a position where the development of individual and team character is subordinated for the more urgent need of scoring more points than the other team. Unfortunately, this model has produced a pool of elite athletes who are now displaying moral reasoning scores that are at an all-time low. Further, the data indicates that team sport athletes score lower than individual sport athletes. Finally, the scores earned by football athletes lies at the bottom of the continuum of scores for team sport athletes (Beller & Stoll, 1995).

In attempting to develop a winning program, the cultural essence of moral and personal development is often neglected. Paradoxically, participants in these communities need moral, motor, and psychological instruction to become their best---at everything. This generalized excellence, sometimes referred to as *arête*, can provide the participant with a sense of consistency in performance that will ultimately guide them toward higher levels of performance in all that they do.

By attempting to teach all in the community how to become 'their best', the community will increase their chances for success. Success may be defined as "...the peace of mind which is the direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best of which you are capable" (Wooden, 2005). Communities comprised of individuals who are successful in this fashion, ultimately have the best chance to win.

There must be a focus upon this process toward excellence and success. Searching for the identification of leadership, philosophy, and beliefs is the first step in identifying what values to teach and how to teach them. Developing a mission statement that can be

actualized provides the community with a focus toward value enrichment. Further, by understanding and applying properly the concept of competition, the community may move aggressively toward personal and collective fulfillment. Finally, true self-confidence can be developed over time through the consistent practice of value laden habits that promote achievement. It is in the development and application of true self confidence that mental toughness may be borne. For, when it comes time to make a play and find a way to win---the mentally tough athlete and team will usually sustain and prevail. Without a firm ethical foundation that fosters true self-confidence this advantage cannot be attained.

#### *Purpose of Study*

The purpose of this three part philosophic study is to examine coaching methodologies that develop and promote sustained excellence in a team culture of competitive football. The following will describe the historical evolution of competitive football; and the simultaneous development of the leadership methodologies of those charged with managing the game---the coaches. The relationship between moral development and an understanding and application of the concept of true competition will be presented with the intent to link these concepts to effective culture development and the leadership necessary to promote growth and success. Further, this dissertation will examine the development and deployment of leadership styles by managers and leaders in areas of concern that do not involve competitive football. An attempt will be made to make a connection between the leadership styles that have proven to be effective in creating cultures of excellence in business that promote the development of the individual from a moral perspective first and foremost with leadership that should be considered by

coaches in competitive football cultures. Finally, the dissertation will explore the concept of ‘mental toughness’ and the relationship of this process to moral development and virtue ethics.

*Football and Leadership: A Historical Evolution*

When Rutgers and Princeton decided to engage in a loosely arranged athletic contest in the latter part of the nineteenth century, few took notice. The contest was played on an open gridiron before spectators who without premeditation and because of casual interest stopped and witnessed. This initial aggregation of gridiron gladiators served as the impetus for what has become an American institution that stirs passions and instigates controversy among spectators and critics. In today’s culture, football between two major teams in a large stadium has no equal (Watterson, 2000).

Early American football coaches viewed football as a method by which to instill will power, self-control, clear thinking, memory, scholastic standing, sportsmanship, and the formation of good habits (Heisman, 2000). The game was originally designed to be a recreational opportunity for college students but quickly became a spectator sport which interested many and created a culture of custodians that came to be known as coaches. Walter Camp, who is known as the father of American football, and is the creator of the first All-American team, was the first true example of the modern American football coach. Camp played at Yale in the 1870’s and ultimately assumed control of the Eli program. As a player, Camp “... [t]wice resigned on the eve of big games when players refused to accept his strategy, or refused to accept his curfew rules (Watterson, 2000, p. 19). Further, “... [t]hough Camp rejoined his teammates and agreed to play, his belief in the team’s need for blind obedience reflected an even stronger desire to win---and a

conviction that his leadership was essential to winning” (Watterson, 2000, p. 19). Hence, early on the template was forged. Football would become a coach’s game, a contest in which the participants would be directed and managed like pieces on a chess board. For, “...[u]nder the guidance of Walter Camp, football developed in crucial ways as a coach’s game from the beginning: a sport structured much like a corporation, with the coach as both tactician and manager (Oriard, 2001).

Amos Alonzo Stagg emerged as the heir apparent to Walter Camp in perpetuating the growth of football. Stagg, who trained under Camp at Yale, brought football to the mid-west and experienced great success at the University of Chicago. Stagg, unlike Camp, became a member of the faculty in the Physical Education Department, while assuming his duties as Head Football Coach. However, after “[b]eginning as an evangelical Christian who worked with athletes, Stagg matured into a big-time football coach who refused to allow any interference by university authorities” (Watterson, 2000, p. 42).

Concurrent with the rise of interest in big-time college football in the mid-west was the initiation of professional football. Originally formed as a type of barnstorming tour, the professional game lagged far behind the college game in popularity during the early part of the twentieth century. Even the signing of Red Grange, the All-American running back after the completion of his career at Illinois failed to generate the interest that the college game did. Grange had set records at Illinois that had established him as the premier player in the country. His play sparked interest in the game that was unprecedented. Consequently, it was thought that professional football would emerge as a

spectator sport that rivaled college football with his signing. However, the college game continued to flourish while the professional game sputtered during this period of time.

After surviving a series of reform movements that were designed to improve the safety of the game and to preserve institutional control and create some semblance of academic integrity, the game spread South and West. Southern schools viewed football as a means to re-establish lagging regional pride; the western schools mirrored their large eastern counterparts in establishing rivalries that became contests played out in near spectacle fashion before large crowds. “Alabama’s defeat of Washington in the Rose Bowl of 1926 and Georgia’s conquest of Yale at New Haven in 1927 helped to raise regional morale and show that southerners could indeed defeat the North on gridiron battlefields” (Watterson, 2000). Both regions spawned coaches who emulated the style and methodology initially popularized by Camp and Stagg; firm discipline and order for the sake of high production.

While the South and the West strove to maintain pace with the East in the development of big-time football, the Mid-West trumped every region by establishing the first national football institution and the sport’s first celebrity coach. Knute Rockne of Notre Dame forged a series of relationships that proved to promote his university, his team, and his career in an almost mythic fashion. Rockne was seen as “...a shrewd and charismatic football coach” (Oriard, 2001, p.130) who after his premature death in an airplane crash became seen as “...the mythic spirit of college football itself” (Oriard, 2001, p.130). The nation’s first celebrity coach spawned a legion of disciples who took to teaching the game in the manner that ‘The Rock’ did--with toughness, discipline, order, and passion---turning boys into men.

The culmination of World War II saw legions of young veterans entering college under the G.I. bill. Many of these veterans found football to their liking. “As in World War I, military planners utilized college football as both a training exercise and as a means of boosting morale. Military leaders believed that football built leadership qualities, inculcated discipline, sharpened aggressive instincts, and taught its officers to react quickly under pressure” (Watterson, 2000). Hence, the game evolved in the post-World War II era as a civilian version of military exercises, complete with training regimens and tactics that were designed by field generals who patrolled the sidelines. It was here that the military academies enjoyed some of their greatest successes in competition; particularly West Point where Colonel Earl ‘Red’ Blaik built the football program into a national powerhouse. The Cadets were the top program in the 1940’s; further cementing the concept that football was a sport that required military style leadership and training for the team to be successful (Watterson, 2000).

As American society moved into the latter half of the twentieth century, the development and mass marketing of television again changed the cultural landscape. Sport was dramatically influenced by this development and football was perhaps the most profoundly influenced. Professional football grew exponentially with the emergence of weekly televised contests. Fans began to identify with teams and coaches who appeared regularly on their television screens. During this time, Vince Lombardi of the Green Bay Packers became a national icon; living out the leadership style he had initially learned as an assistant to Coach Blaik for a whole new generation of coaches to see. Lombardi saw professional football as a full-time business which enabled the participants to be more dedicated (Watterson, 2000).



While the pro game flourished during this time, big-time college football struggled with the societal change that infiltrated college campuses in the 1960's and 1970's. The emergence of the counter culture as a factor in campus life and the process of integration in the Southern schools caused a change in the heretofore blind acceptance of the football coach as the ultimate authority figure. Authority was questioned on campuses across the country in an unprecedented fashion. The Viet Nam War and the Civil Rights movement tended to polarize groups and generations. Students began to express their opinions in a more assertive manner--seeking answers to questions that they had previously been encouraged not to ask. Coaches began to engage in behaviors that were less authoritarian in an attempt to manage the changes in their constituencies and campus cultures.

The explosion of cable television in the 1980's laid the groundwork for the current modern professional and collegiate game (Masteralexis, Burr, & Hume, 2007). Both big-time college and professional programs are highly visible entities in which the coach is afforded celebrity status. The skill set required of the modern coach is diverse, requiring an ability to create a vision oriented culture creating an "succeed at all costs environment" being the essential component of that repertoire. Coaches must promote, exhort, discipline, strategize, train, and guide their troops in a manner in which a top executive would lead their corporate staff. The mysticism that surrounds the successful big-time football coach is similar to the reverence offered to the holy man or shaman of the eastern cultures. The successful modern American football coach must possess the ability to transform the individuals in their charge individually and collectively into something greater than was believed possible at the outset.

### *Sport and Character*

It has been purported by many that sport builds character. The early origin of sport training in America can be traced to a desire by educators to build character within the individual participant. In fact, “[t]he character formation and manliness development functions quickly took on a mythical status” (Ladd & Mathison, 1999, p.174) in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Further, it is with this in mind that football became an integral part of university life in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century. President Woodrow Wilson of Princeton was a firm believer in the adage that sport built character. “Wilson argued that football developed moral and intellectual qualities---he listed precision, decision, presence of mind, and endurance” (Watterson, 2000, p. 27). . Legendary coach John Heisman of Georgia Tech argued that a football coach “...can do more character building for the boys than can nineteen ministers out of twenty or ninety nine fathers out of a one hundred” (Heisman, 2000, p. 18). Historically, we have arrived at a point in competitive football where this original intent for the integration of football into the university community has been lost. In an attempt to recapture this goal and simultaneously develop the team culture that will promote generalized success, we must consider the relationship between moral development and competition.

### *Moral Development and Competition*

All cultures possess some type of formal or informal code regarding morality. Morality, in this sense, can be referred to as the motives, actions, and intentions that we display toward one another (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1999). Further, the code of

conduct that we adopt to govern ourselves in actualizing these moral intentions is known as ethics (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1999). Hence, as we begin to examine how to develop a team culture in which sustained excellence will become the desired outcome, we must consider how we treat each other; teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, spectators and so forth in the process. Sustained excellence implies consistency of desired performance, and the development of a pattern of behavior that promotes this consistency must be adopted. This consistency may be found in the development of virtue. For, “[t]he content of good character is virtue. Virtues such as honesty, justice, courage, and compassion...are dispositions to behave in a morally good way” (Lickona, 2004, p.7). Current data indicates that athlete populations score lower than non-athlete populations on instruments that measure moral reasoning levels (Beller & Stoll, 1995; Shields & Bredemeier (2005), Shields, Bredemeier, LaVoi, & Power, (2005). Moreover, team sport athletes tend to score lower than individual sport athletes, and revenue generating sport athletes score lower than non-revenue generating sport athletes (Beller & Stoll, 1995). Finally, football athletes score lower than all other athletes with the exception of lacrosse and hockey players. Hence, the football coach who is desirous of building a culture of sustained excellence based upon values is faced with the dilemma of how to build the culture in light of this data. Fortunately, research indicates that moral development can be acquired through the process of cognitive dissonance (Hersh, Paolitto, and Reimer, 1979). Moral development can be learned if the environmental influences and role modeling are in place to support such growth (Beller & Stoll, 1995). Consequently, if we choose to embrace the process of moral development education as an integral part of the

development of our team culture, we may raise the understanding of moral reasoning and ultimately impact the moral actions of the agents involved.

How we think and act about ourselves and our opponents contributes to the development of team culture and the ability of a team to play their best. Focusing upon the opponent as ‘the enemy’ and characterizing them as an obstacle that must be overcome leads the team to focus their concerns in the area of becoming better than the referential standard imposed by the opposition rather than a self-imposed standard of excellence that may become less limiting. Moreover, the excellence that is sought after culturally in terms of athletic performance may truly become limited if the group fails to acknowledge the importance of establishing a system of values to base their development upon. For, as Susan Saint Sing offers:

If sport does not help us transcend our base nature, then why play?

Why spend hours and days and months and years drilling the wrong

message into young people’s minds? For a medal that costs three

dollars? I don’t want to be a part of that, and I have tried---not

always succeeding mind you---but tried to make sports something

more, to plant the seeds at least to pursue excellence---arête, the

beauty of body and soul checking and counterbalancing one another,

pulling the other to a higher, better place---and us with it. (Saint

Sing, 2004, p. 69).

### *Ideal and Realistic Perspectives of Competition*

Compete! Our participation in sport demands that we learn “how to compete”. Hence, it is paramount for the leader who is intent upon establishing a culture of values

that will promote sustained excellence to understand the importance of establishing a common understanding of what it means to be competitive within the context of their culture.

When we compete in a sporting contest, the majority of the outcomes result in one party winning and one party losing. It is this zero-sum clarity that provides some of the allure for us to affiliate and participate with a sport team. The black and white nature of the scoreboard serves to validate or repudiate one's body of work. Tom Morris of the Morris Institute for Human Values refers to this as the "...competitive victory model of the West. In this model, excellence is all about winning--a zero sum game" (Morris, 1997, p. 50). Further, "...this competitive victory model tends to promote individualistic and adversarial thinking about excellence" (Morris, 1997, p. 51). Hence, if we are to assume the vulnerability that this situation demands of us, we are moved to embrace an attitude that drives us to provide maximum effort in the display of skill and strategy when matched against another or a referential standard. For, perhaps, as Vince Lombardi; the legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers, is credited with saying, "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing". Unfortunately, winning in this sense does not necessarily imply that excellence was required for the feat to occur. "You can possess competitive excellence without possessing individual excellence" (Morris, 1997, p.53).

#### *Two Views of Competition: Realistic and Ideal*

Competition may be viewed as an activity in which one gains at the expense of another (Keating, 1965) or one man's advantage is seen as another man's loss (Reich, 1971). In doing so, the competitor seeks excellence that is validated through victory. It is in this attainment of victory that the athlete or the team finds excellence and, without its

attainment, excellence is limited. “He {Keating} is careful to define the term {excellence} as being the best, regardless of flaws that one may have as a person...Achievement has no reference point to itself: success is to succeed” (Gibson, 1993, p. 57). Therefore, through the lens that Keating provides us, we must view excellence in terms of winning. In Keating’s view, “excellence resides in winning” (Gibson, 1993, p. 46). A review of the perceptions offered by many successful coaches at the elite level in football leaves one with the perspective that winning may indeed be the goal of competition and the sole path to an excellent existence for an elite football coach and football team. Unfortunately, “...competition for many is merely an arena for venting aggression; it is taken as a proving ground for establishing who is stronger, tougher, or smarter...when competition is thus used as a means of creating a self-image relative to others that the worst in a person tends to come out; then the ordinary fears and frustrations become greatly exaggerated” (Gallwey, 1997, p. 105). Former Head Coaches Forest Evashevski of Iowa, Earl (Red) Blaik of Army, and Woody Hayes of Ohio State all proclaimed an affinity for the competitive orientation that promoted winning as its goal. For Evashevski, “You may as well say of a surgeon that it matters not whether the patient lives or dies, but how the surgeon makes the cut” (Gibson, 1993, p. 49). Further, according to Keating, Blaik maintained that “the purpose of the game of football is to win”, while Hayes contended that “a coach does not go out to build character, he goes out to win” (Gibson, 1993, p. 46). Finally, Keating offers that “excellence applies to any quality or feature in which the person or thing excels or surpasses all others” (Gibson, 1993, p. 45). Hence, in Keating’s view one may play poorly and still find excellence in winning. This type of ‘winning ugly’ is more than acceptable in the football community.

This perspective that ‘a win is a win’ and that winning at all costs is acceptable may be referred to here as the realistic view of competition. For many in the world of competitive football, this view prevails and drives the vision of the leaders of these cultures. As Oakland Raider owner Al Davis says, “Just win, baby”.

An alternative view of competition presents it as “a mutual quest for excellence” (Simon, 1985). Here competition is seen as a more cooperative activity in which “...each competitor contracts to provide a challenge to the opponent” (Simon, 1985, p. 27). Taken from the ancient Greek perspective and from the Latin origin of the word competition, ‘con-petire’ competition in this case means to search together. In this case, it is implied that both parties search together for excellence with each group pushing the other to greater levels of performance through challenge. Being a participant in sport requires us to make a bargain with ourselves. When we choose to become a participant in sport we must ante up and decide what the price is that we are willing to pay in order to become competitive. Competitive is in this sense regarding our desire to achieve excellence. For, competition must be seen as a process through which excellence is sought (Gibson, 1993). Further, we must decide where this excellence begins and ends. If we are to become the participant who desires consistency in our performance, then we must consider our quest for excellence to become a quest for generalized excellence or *arête*. Susan Saint Sing in *Spirituality of Sport* offers that when you achieve *arête*, “...you achieve the heightened state of...grace and excellence” (Saint Sing, 2004, p. 12). Further, *arête* must be considered from the perspective of virtue. For, “[v]irtue comes from the Greek word *arête*, meaning excellence. This Aristotelian virtue is defined as consisting of three elements: a) good habits, b) the middle ground between the extremes of too much

and too little, and c) a habit that is a firm and settled disposition toward choosing good” (Patterson, 2003). Moreover, “[t]he Greeks in their pursuit of excellence, strove for beauty as a combination of grace, elegance, learning, poise, and goodness. To the ancients, one could not be beautiful and do ugly acts” (Saint Sing, 2004, p. 32). We must not and cannot seek to compartmentalize our excellence. Selective and situational display of excellence is the hallmark of the pretender and not the competitor. It is in our understanding of our spiritual nature that we may begin to approach and expand the limits of our excellence. Current Los Angeles Lakers coach Phil Jackson “...is keen to stress to his players that they should honor and respect their opponents since they help you achieve your best as an athlete” (Turner, 2006, p. 31). Competitors with this view seek excellence in the development of their own personal skill repertoire, and measure success against their mastery of this skill set rather than through a comparison with an opponent or standard that might not apply an appropriate challenge. Former UCLA Coach John Wooden; whose teams won 10 NCAA Championships in a 12 year span between 1964 and 1975, maintained that he never was concerned with what the opponents did in preparing for competition, he was concerned with how well they prepared to do what they strived to do best. “I didn’t concern myself with the other team’s preparation and potential...I just concentrated on ours” (Wooden, 2005, p. 52). Wooden disciple and current USC Head Football Coach Pete Carroll takes this thought further when he says, “{On game day} we already know how to come through. We don’t have to do anything special...just go do what you always do. Don’t pressure yourself; just do what you always do...It works, there’s no problem” (Voight, 2006, p. 32).



Competition here is seen as a process oriented activity as opposed to an outcome oriented activity. The process of seeking excellence supersedes the outcome that is attained by competing. The athlete and team that adopts this view is oriented toward a long range vision in which they might see the outcome as part of the process rather than as the final judgment of their worthiness relative to the process. In adopting this perspective toward competition, one need not disavow the fruits that winning might provide. Winning is and should be important in football and all sports. When one has achieved a standard of performance that truly is excellent, they will find themselves in a position to secure victory. It is here that a competitive standard of excellence to rise to a level of performance that will withstand the self-imposed restrictions on performance and the obstacles presented by the partners in competition must be achieved. For, “[t]o lose is to fail to meet the challenge; to win is to succeed” (Simon, 1985, p. 32). Further, winning may be seen as overcoming an obstacle to achieve a goal (Gallwey, 1997). One can appreciate and covet winning while maintaining the ideal perspective on competition (Kretchmar, 2003). Moving in a direction that defines excellence through winning as part of the process rather than the outcome that defines the process must be considered by the leaders of competitive football cultures. Hence, in this culture their role might be viewed as a group desirous of appreciating the journey that they make together, extolling each other to higher levels of performance through consistent display of positive human interaction. A culture such as this views “How you run the race” as more important than winning or losing the race (Wooden, 2005). For, winning or losing is seen as a natural by product of consistent excellence or inconsistent fragmentation (Wooden, 2005). Competition is not defined by victory nor denied by defeat. It exists in the effort that is

exerted in the preparation for occurrence of one of these two inevitable outcomes (Wooden, 2005). “The struggle itself, the test, is what gives value to the prize and is something that the competitive leader revels in” (Wooden, 2005, p. 54).

### *Leadership Applications for the Culture of Competitive Football*

Whether a team adopts a realistic perspective toward competition or embraces an idealistic perspective on competition is largely contingent upon the leadership methodology employed by the leaders. Leadership has been defined many ways in contemporary literature, always with the concepts of task (production) and people (relationships) being the pivotal considerations (Zaleznik, 1977). Good leaders liberate people to do what is required of them in the most humane way (DePree, 1989). They demonstrate the skill of influencing people to work enthusiastically toward goals identified as being for the common good (Hunter, 1998). They are facilitators, helping others to achieve their greatness by helping the organization to succeed (Wooden, 2005) while using power to influence the thoughts and actions of other people (Zaleznik, 1977). Further, great leadership has been characterized as the “...capacity to develop the will to achieve and accept a positive mental attitude toward the attempt, rather than focusing upon the failure” (Rice, 2004, p. 33). A review of the evolution of leadership methodologies in American culture reveals a pattern of change that is consistent with our achievement oriented yet individualistic nature.

### *Authoritarianism*

Early models for leadership were formed from military models. Successful military leadership was associated with toughness, discipline, and ultimately victory. As

America evolved from a rural agricultural based economy to an industrialized nation, the need for managers and leaders in the boom that was becoming American business became apparent. Early leadership styles in American business mirrored the styles that had proven to be successful in the American military. The early American business leader was authoritarian in nature. Authoritarian leadership calls for the follower to accept the directives handed down by the supervisor without question. The organizational objectives of the firm were the driving force behind the operation of the firm. This authoritarian methodology emerged as a popular style of leadership in the first half of the twentieth century. The authoritarian leader determines all policies for group members and details methods of goal attainments. Further, they develop the overall mission for the group, and share the methods by which the mission will be completed step by step as they deem necessary (Levin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). The conforming organizational worker of the 1950's, totally dedicated to the firm, did not question authority (Bass, 1999). Moreover, going beyond one's self-interest, for the good of the organization, was a norm for the organizational worker (Bass, 1999).

### *Transactional*

As American culture evolved in the 1960's into a society where the questioning of authority became more acceptable, workers demanded more from their association with their organizations. During this time a more transactional type of leadership emerged. In this model, the leader provides the worker with a contingent reward for meeting performance standards (Joseph, 2003). This transactional style of leadership calls for the leader to provide followers with resources and rewards in exchange for motivation, productivity, and effective task accomplishments (Nahavandi, 1997). Transactional

leadership also promotes the concept of management by exception, a laissez faire approach that supports intervention by management only when the subordinate fails to perform their expected duties (Bass, 1985).

### *Transformational*

As our economy moved from an industrial production oriented economy to a service based economy in the late 1970's and the early 1980's managerial and leadership focus turned to a more transformational approach (Bass, 1999). Transformational leadership calls for the leader to be a source of inspiration to their followers, articulating vision and goals, while fostering an environment where relationships can be formed and visions shared (Bass, 1985). Utilizing their charismatic nature, transformational leaders offer their subordinates individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation in an attempt to increase affiliation with the organization. Transformational leaders strive to exert idealized influence upon their charges--establishing and modeling high standards of performance while displaying determination and confidence (Bass, 1999). Mature moral development is required of the transformational leader (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

Transformational leaders attempt to involve subordinates in the process of developing the vision of the organization with the organizations objectives remaining the primary focus of activity for the leader and the subordinate (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2003). Transformational leadership aspires to inspire followers to become enabled so they may enact revolutionary change (Joseph, 2003). This methodology is a popular one in our age of e-commerce and internet business (Joseph, 2003).

### *Servant Leadership*

All of these aforementioned leadership methodologies have proven to be successful in terms of the productivity generated by the culture for limited periods of time. Further, the success attained by the culture has proven to be cyclical in terms of time and place that the success has been attained. However, an alternative methodology exists that has transcended the limitations of time and place. Servant leadership with its focus upon the development of the individual first and the group second has its roots in the teachings of virtue ethics espoused by the Ancient Greeks in the fifth and sixth centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the teachings of Jesus Christ as related and lived by the example of the apostle Paul provide a historical frame of reference for this methodology that is grounded in achievement that promotes personal excellence in terms of the development of one's moral character and ability to form relationships that will build cultural strength.

#### *Servant-Leadership: A Value Driven Alternative*

The path to success for the team culture that adopts the idealistic perspective of competition as its guide is treacherous. The scoreboard does not always tell the story and, without a well conceived and well articulated mission, the route may become unclear. The development of a mission statement built upon sound principles (values) provides an opportunity for the group to measure their progress toward their agreed upon definition of success. The mission articulates the beliefs of the leadership, and the belief system should be grounded in ethical/moral values that will promote individual growth for all. Leadership that promotes the development of individual growth is necessary to optimize

group performance (Greenleaf, 1977), (DePree, 1989), (Patterson, 2003), and (Covey, 1990). Perhaps the leaders of the communities which seek to adopt the idealistic perspective toward competition should consider employing the methodology of servant-leadership.

The modern era concept of servant-leadership first emerged with Robert Greenleaf's 1977 work, *Servant-Leadership*. Following the tradition of virtue ethics and the work of Aristotle, Jesus the Christ, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Paul, Greenleaf explains that servant-leadership "...begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 27). The servant-leader transforms their thought process to align with the needs of others rather than with their own personal desires. They must change their thinking from what is it that I want to what is it that they need? Further, servant-leaders perceive their role from the perspective of what impact their actions have on others. The servant-leader will ask, "Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 27). In this view it is believed that through the nurturing of those in their charge, servant-leaders would empower their subordinates to achieve at levels of performance that would exceed expectations.

Since Greenleaf's original work, many authors have endeavored to identify the characteristics possessed by the servant-leader. Servant-leaders have been shown to display humility, compassion, consideration, altruism, love, empathy, and an ability to empower others and to develop relationships that are communal in nature (Hunter, 1998, Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2003, Laub, 1999, and Battan, 1998).

Servant leadership is a bottom up view of leadership. The leader builds relationships with subordinates that ultimately will enable them to identify their talents and abilities. The leader assumes the responsibility of providing autonomous opportunity for the subordinates to manifest these talents within the organizational framework. As the subordinates grow in ability and their achievement levels improve, the organization will ultimately prosper and experience gains in productivity.

Hence, as the leader strives to create a mission for the group they must decide what core values and beliefs are imperative for the group to adhere to as they strive to attain their individual and collective excellence. Further, the leader must consider his or her actions in relationship to the style of leadership that they choose to employ. What style will best aid their group in working towards a collective sense of self-referential generalized excellence? In this spirit, the mission must be defined and undertaken. In doing so, standards of performance are established for all that in which the group is engaged (Walsh, 1998). These standards of performance offer measurement criteria for agreed upon levels of excellence that exist for each activity that is defined by the group.

#### *Mental Toughness through Virtue Driven Focus*

Ultimately, the group must “line up and play”. At this time it is imperative that the team be confident, focused, and trust each other (Voight, 2006). Here you must be at your best when your best is needed. Confidence and poise are the immediate precursors to competitive greatness and you must earn the right to be confident (Wooden, 2005). The development of responsible individuals who are focused upon the quest for personal and collective excellence that true servant leadership provides may facilitate this process for the culture. Hence, bolstered by strong self-efficacy that will promote sustained effort

(Bandura, 1986) and self-confidence borne from skill mastery acquired through intense preparation (Vealey, 1986), the team can perform unencumbered in terms of anxiety and fear. It is here that the mental toughness necessary to 'play well when it counts' may be engaged by the team. For, through the development of self and group responsibility, they have learned how to respect each other. This respect leads to inherent trust in one another's abilities, providing realistic hope for a desirable outcome. Further, as adversity strikes, as it always will in competition, the group may maintain faith in one another borne from their understanding of the trust that had been acquired through respect and responsibility. Winning will take care of itself if you take care of the effort that precedes the score (Wooden, 2005).

#### *Ethical Development of Mental Toughness*

All coaches desire for their teams to be mentally tough when faced with difficult situations in competition. The nature of elite competition requires that the participants seek and employ extraordinary skills of concentration and focus, determination and persistence, tolerance for frustration, and self efficacy and self-confidence. These attributes have been referred to as the six rooms in the house of mental toughness (Rieke, Hammermeister, & Chase, 2008). How is one to build these attributes in the individuals and in their team? Often coaches will undertake overt attempts to strengthen players and teams in these areas in a compartmentalized nature. Structuring practices and meetings to require players to fight through adversity or display unusual determination or persistence to endure pain and suffering, the coach seeks to build this mental toughness. Sometime, the concept is discussed openly, with specific situations cited where the player or team explicitly demonstrated or failed to demonstrate competence in a situation when



difficulty was thrust upon them. What is often unrecognized is the importance of developing the values and relationships that will build the trust in one's own ability and the ability of their teammates to withstand the difficulty when it presents itself. This state of security in one's belief in their ability and the ability of their teammates may arise from excellence in decision making and an excellence in character (Devettere, 2004). Being mentally tough is about being able to trust oneself, their ability, and the ability of those on their team. Trust must be earned and this trust must be earned through the consistent display of responsibility that will ultimately create respect for self and others. (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1999). Football is a responsibility laden sport. Not only do the athletes assume tremendous responsibilities on and off the field relative to academics, strength and conditioning, social conduct and so forth, the game itself demands that the participant perform their responsibilities well to be effective. If a player cannot align themselves correctly and understand and execute the assignment that they are responsible for--they cannot and will not play. Even the most talented at all levels of competition have been precluded from participation because of this shortcoming. It is here that the basis for relationship building and the team building can be found. Effective teams are responsible teams that consistently display the ability to perform their assigned responsibilities. When individuals and teams perform in this fashion they truly may trust in their abilities and each other. Hence, when faced with difficulty, they may confidently persevere and display determination that is borne from an ethical foundation and not from an isolated circumstance that is not readily transferable to the situation at hand.

### *Background of Study*

The feelings and emotions that come from a lifetime association that spans four decades with a game tend to leave one with firm dispositions about how and why the game should be played. From the time that I first received a helmet and shoulder pads and was asked to perform unnatural things to my body that seemed cruel and unusual, I loved it. I loved everything about it. I played the game competitively from age eight through seventeen and while more proficient at the game of basketball--I ended my playing career there in college--I knew even then that there was nothing else like football. From the sweat, the dirt, the grass stains on the uniform, and the smell of the grass on the bottom of the pile, to the slow motion of the pass as it leaves your hand and makes its way to the receiver--will it ever get there? He's open!! All of the immersion associated with the practice of the game of football and the discipline associated with that practice in retrospect is/was special. The game demands more of us as participants than any other game I know. The physical toll is demanding. Whether you are playing and sacrificing your body on a daily basis, or you are coaching, pushing the limits--watching film and developing game plans deep into the night, assuming the existence of a sleep deprived zombie who is driven to find a way to make it work for the team this week better than it ever has before--the game will test you physically in a manner that you don't believe you can handle--until you do! Further, the game will ask that you emotionally to ante up and deal with the individual battles that arise during competition and embrace the responsibility that comes from winning or losing in terms of the outcome. The willingness to put your body of work 'out there' for the multitudes to evaluate based upon the outcome is a defining characteristic of competitive sport. Finally, the

deployment of strategy demands that you cognitively process and commit to memory a series of complex instructions that must be automated and reproduced at a high rate of speed while under physical duress. All of this must occur under the watchful eye of a community that demands that you do well; for their existence and self-worth in some ways is tied to your success. Football is special, and it must be treated as such. However, the individuals who play and coach the game must recognize that this special nature must come without any special treatment. Too often, individuals who possess exceptional ability in the game are treated in a fashion that is counterproductive to their development as players, coaches, and human beings. Shortcomings in areas of personal development that are seemingly unrelated to their development as players and coaches are overlooked. Inconsistent performance in areas unrelated to direct practice and competition on the field are condoned, for they are not important on Saturday afternoon when the stands are full and it is time to 'make a play'. The player or the coach who shows up on game day and gets it done is the guy that you want on your team and/or in the line-up. Everything else is to be subordinated for the good of the scoreboard and the performance of the individual at this time. It is this philosophy that has given rise to the cultures that are now predominant in modern football. Because of this dichotomous existence, football is viewed by those who are not practitioners in a questionable fashion. In many cases, football players and football coaches are seen as a privileged population that are undeserving of the adulation that is often presented to them by the media and the general population.

*Researcher's Stance*

I believe that too many football cultures pay lip service to the development of the individual participant in a holistic sense. Moreover, I believe that the cultures are consumed with the bottom-line, the scoreboard, and unwittingly neglect and abuse the participants by not holding them responsible and accountable for their development as excellent humans first and excellent players second. Fortunately, precedent has been set in this area that the caretakers of these cultures can embrace that will enable them to visualize how they might succeed in terms of developing excellent individuals while winning games. The work of many former coaches who have succeeded in this fashion needs to be examined, perpetuated, and adapted to meet the current demands of the modern football culture. John Wooden won ten National Championships while coaching basketball at UCLA. His work has served as a model for many coaches, including two of today's more successful college football coaches: Pete Carroll of the University of Southern California and Urban Meyer of the University of Florida. Coach Wooden believed that success is a process oriented activity in which winning and losing is ultimately the by-product of a consistent search for generalized excellence (Wooden, 2005). Further, Coach Wooden offered that the individuals in your charge must see "...that your concern for their interests and welfare must go beyond what they can do for you" (Wooden, 2005, p. 30). Similarly, the work of Bill Walsh must be examined. Coach Walsh led the San Francisco 49ers to three Super Bowl Championships in the National Football League in the 1980's. Many of Coach Walsh's former assistants are currently employed as Head Football Coaches in the NFL and at the collegiate level. Walsh built his culture with a methodical approach that was highly detailed oriented. However, there

was no detail to Walsh that was more important than the implementation of a philosophy that would promote the development of quality individuals first and foremost. In his seminal work, *Finding the Winning Edge*, Walsh maintains:

A head coach's philosophy also has a substantial effect on his ability to keep a proper perspective on critical matters. For example, while winning is certainly important (given the fact that an individual can lose his job if his team doesn't win on a regular basis), it's certainly not the only criteria for success. In fact, all factors considered, it should not even be the most essential factor.

To a point, a head coach should measure success in terms of how well he is able to carry out his responsibilities relative to what he feels coaching is all about. As such, he can place greater emphasis on developing his players to their full potential, and on developing a proper foundation for the team to perform well in the future, than on whatever actions might otherwise emanate from a 'win now or else' approach (Walsh, 1998, p.15).

Like Wooden, Walsh placed a great emphasis upon the development of moral values within the context of the culture. Walsh states that, "Your values serve as your moral compass...(they) help to determine what things you choose to pay attention to how hard you will work at them" (Walsh, 1998, p.18). Walsh further maintains that this will allow you to focus upon the development of the well-being of your players and assistants as one of your preeminent concerns, ensuring that the welfare of the organization is a byproduct of this development (Walsh, 1998).

I have attempted to live the life that Wooden and Walsh speak of and it is a perilous journey to undertake. In an attempt to understand how to fulfill the role that the coach must assume in a more comprehensive manner, I entered the doctoral program in Sport Philosophy/Sport Ethics at the University of Idaho. During this tenure, I have completed seven research classes. Three of these classes focused upon the process of qualitative research. I have coached football competitively since the late 1980's, with the majority of my experience as a Head Football Coach at High Schools in North Carolina and South Carolina.

I believe that we are at a crossroads in competitive football today. With the advent of commercialization and "commodification" that has arisen with the media explosion of the 1980's, modern football cultures are under more pressure than ever to produce on the scoreboard---and produce quickly. The greatness of the game and the ability of the game to bring out personal greatness in all lies in the hands of the custodians of these cultures---the coaches. The work of men such as Wooden and Walsh must be studied and perpetuated to ensure that the lessons of the past are not lost in the firestorm that is the immediacy of reward society that we live in today. The ability of the game to retain depth and meaning is at stake. The game is more than a game. It is a mystic ritual that takes you places that you never believed you could be transported to. John Gibson in *Performance versus Results* describes the metaphysical nature of the game that we all must join forces to preserve:

Out on that practice field, in the cool pool of light that splits the darkness, the athletes weave the patterns of the game. In a ritual of action, they unfold their relationship to the practice and each other.

The seasons sweep, and the sweet smell of juicy summer grass finds them with shirts off, but wearing a layer of sweat. The fall rains beat on the hoods of their rain suits and the playing surface is slick, opening that chapter of interplay with mud. The winter snows have to be heavy, or the frozen ground rutted, to drive them from that pool of night brightness. But always, the relationship of the player to the craft, and the practitioners are there, rain or shine, to make those magical touches on the ball and drive themselves further and deeper into themselves, the practice and the tradition. (Gibson, 1993, p.108)

### *Design of Study*

I have chosen to employ a qualitative methodology, narrative inquiry, to explore the context of competitive football. A qualitative framework allowed the thoughts, feelings and actions of the participants in the study, the coaches, to share their stories in a fashion that provided rich meaning to the details. An attempt to quantify their stories would have failed to give attention to the process by which these men lead their charges: causing us to focus primarily on the outcomes that have been generated by their cultures. Narrative inquiry can be considered as the process by which we study persons and their experiences in context and time through their stories. Story telling or as it is known in the discipline of educational research, narrative inquiry "...is a methodology that frequently appeals to teachers and teacher educators. Part of the appeal is, no doubt, the comfort that comes from thinking about telling and listening to stories" (Clandinin, Pusher, & Orr, 2007, p. 21). And, after all, good coaching is nothing more than good teaching for effective coaches are good teachers (Wooden, 2005). Hence this study was undertaken in

the spirit of teaching and coaching in the fashion of sharing information through the process of a narrative.

The reflection and rich descriptions of details that formed the responses to the interview questions were solicited with the intent that the answers should be offered in the mode of reflective story telling rather than in the dispensation of nuggets of information. It is the experience that these participants have to offer that brings authenticity and authority to their responses; and it is through their lived experiences as players first and now as coaches that the information is to be found. This is the focus of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry focuses upon the "...lived experience--that is how their lives are lived" and ultimately leads to the "...study of that experience as a story" (Clandinin, Pusher, & Orr, 2007, p. 22). Consequently, we must consider what the definition of a story is and how a story brings power to this study. A story may be viewed as a "...portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made meaningful" (Clandinin, Pusher, & Orr, 2007, p. 22). This is how we make meaning. We recall the events of our past, and construct meanings from them that will serve to guide our future actions.

As the time increases between when the events of the story actually unfolded and the time when the events are recounted to the inquirer, the story will take different shape and form. What at one time might have constituted a salient detail might become an obscure footnote as the story teller reflects and continuously constructs meaning from his reflection upon the lived experience. As a coach builds a culture and reflects upon the growth that occurred during the process, he will undoubtedly have a strong opinion about how and why this growth transpired. By engaging them in the "give and take" that a



series of broad open ended questions that encourages dialogue of a practitioner to practitioner nature, the opportunity exists for the interviewer to obtain information that has the depth and meaning to provide a platform to construct collective meaning from the study as it compares to the literature.

Football lends itself well to this process. Stories of great coaches, great games, great teams and so forth are plentiful and critical to the understanding of the game. The four horsemen of Notre Dame, Knute Rockne Winning One for the Gipper, Bear Bryant and the Junction Boys molding themselves into an elite strike force that will strike fear in the hearts of opponents by the practice of their toughness and discipline earned through their time together in the grueling Texas heat of that long ago Fall camp are all examples of legends that when shared in the culture of football serve to help construct reality for present day practitioners. Each game, practice, meeting, season, career and so on is a story unto itself. As the details of each story emerge, one can see the references to the traditions and practices that have served to make the game so important to so many. Further, the subtleties that exist in an almost invisible form, lurking beneath the surface find their way to the top when the participant is given the free reign to 'tell their story'.

Moreover, these nuances and subtleties often comprise the critical elements of what we do and why we do what we do. Only through the process of storytelling can we find these critical elements and examine how to use them for further growth in the game and each other. All coaches are story tellers. When asked to demonstrate an application of technique or diagram a scheme that has served them well during game competition, they usually revert to the telling of a story that often begins, 'you won't believe this, but...'.

### *Data Generation*

A series of interviews to obtain qualitative data in a narrative fashion was elicited from ten football coaches. The interviews sought to find themes that persist relative to belief systems, missions, competition, mental toughness, and success. The perspectives offered by these coaches was compared and contrasted with the current literature in the aforementioned areas. Interviews allow people to convey to others a situation from their own perspective and in their own words. They are conversations with structure and purpose that are defined and controlled by the researcher (Kvale, 1996). An interview conducted between peers in a profession offers and opportunity for meaning to be examined and new meanings constructed as a result of the conversation. The dynamics of the interaction between interviewer and interviewee is critical in establishing the parameters of the conversation and facilitating the opportunity for the conversation to evolve into something of an epiphany for both the interviewer and interviewee. The interviewer must be open to new and unexpected phenomena. For, new insights and descriptions of meaning may evolve from the interchange between interviewer and interviewee (Kvale, 1996). Further, the interview seeks to provide the interviewer with descriptions of specific situations and sequences that may link theory to practical application, rather than a series of general opinions (Kvale, 1996). All participants in this study were interviewed over the telephone.

All of the participants selected were employed as Head Football Coaches at the time of the interview. Further, all of the coaches selected had either established their programs as successful in terms of winning games and/or developing quality individuals within the framework of their program in their current job or in positions that they held

previously. The men selected had been part of programs or had developed programs that members of the coaching community admired and aspired to emulate. I had worked for one of the participants as an assistant coach, and personally knew nine of the ten coaches interviewed. Moreover, six of the ten selected had recruited young men that I had coached as a High School Head Coach in North Carolina and South Carolina. I felt that this personal connection facilitated the interchange necessary to develop conversations of depth that would result in the construction of meaning beyond the superficial.

#### *Institutional Review and Approval*

The University of Idaho Institution Review Board reviewed this study and approved this study. See Appendix B. All participants gave verbal approval via telephone to be a part of this study. The IRB reviewed letter of consent is in Appendix B.

#### *Participants*

All of the participants in the study are Head Football Coaches at NCAA institutions. Five of the coaches are Division I Head Coaches, four of the coaches were Division I-AA Head Coaches and one coach was a Division II Head Coach. All of the coaches have been involved in the building of a program or programs that have been successful in terms of winning and excellence. The participants range in age from thirty eight to seventy one. Further they range in years of experience from one year as a Head Coach to thirty two years of experience.

### *Recording Data*

Information received from the interview questions and the subsequent follow up discussions that took place during the course of the interview were transcribed simultaneously to rough field notes. These notes then were immediately transcribed to a word file, with information recalled from the conversation ‘fleshing out’ the details of the rough copy of the notes. A finished copy of the word file was sent to the interviewee to ensure accuracy and authenticity of the information. The give and take process that is discussion among coaches regarding program development required for the questions to be grouped and regrouped accordingly during the course of the interview to promote discussion and the sharing of insights.

### *Data Analysis*

The data were analyzed in terms of searching for common themes and unique approaches that might distinguish cultures that have developed excellence over time. The constructions that are offered as the realities in the subjective offerings of the interviewees must be viewed from the perspective of the interviewee. There is a wide range of experience, geographic location, and level of play that is encompassed by the participants. Coaching Division II football in North Carolina is different from being the Head Coach at a Division I institution in the Big Twelve conference that is domiciled in the Rocky Mountain state of Colorado. Moreover, an individual who has developed and sustained program excellence at multiple institutions in three different conferences will offer insights that are distinguishable from the coach who is seeking this level of

performance for their group as a ‘first time’ head coach. The data was examined with these distinguishing characteristics in mind.

The data were read and reflected upon in an information seeking mode, with the mindset that themes that are not recognized by the use of literature by the researcher are likely to emerge after such reflection is undertaken. This process is well described as “...essentially a synthetic one in which the constructions that have emerged from {been shaped by} inquirer-source interactions are reconstructed into meaningful wholes” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 333). Finding patterns from these insights was the goal of the analytic process, with particular emphasis placed upon the examination of the stories offered by the interviewees. Stories are rich in detail, and the world of competitive football lends itself well to the process of story telling. To illustrate points of emphasis, coaches often talk about a specific player, game, or season to share the depth of meaning.

The data were analyzed first on an on-going basis. As information was collected from each interview, the data were examined in an attempt to construct meaning relative to the theory that had been offered by the literature. Further, as more data were collected, ‘new’ data were compared to previously collected data. This was done to continue the process of constructing meaning, seeking to impose a series of checks and balances regarding the thoughts that the researcher was developing regarding the meaning of the data. Moreover, this process allowed for the researcher to consider how the interview process might be altered to improve the quality of the dialogue for the next interview in the study.

Finally, a summative analysis was conducted where all of the data were compared and contrasted. This process enabled the researcher to identify patterns in the data that led

to conclusions regarding meaning relative to the importance of the themes in cultural development. Further, responses that were inconsistent with the majority of the data assembled were viewed in a more reflective manner. This was done in an attempt to seek meaning and cause for the nature of the response and to identify the resultant impact that the response may have had upon the development of the culture of the respondent. This was only possible through the summative process, which serves to culminate the process of data analysis

The interpretation of the summative analysis is presented herein in the form of three articles. The articles discuss the concept of competition, the importance of understanding and developing beliefs in the context of a mission, and the understanding of and application of the concept of mental toughness. These articles all compare the coaches perspectives with the theoretical frameworks that exist on each topic.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Competition and the Pursuit of Excellence in College Football

#### *Introduction*

Compete! Coaches everywhere exhort their charges to push themselves to hone their competitive edge individually and collectively in pursuit of victory. Football is a physical game; more than a contact sport, it may be viewed as a collision sport. Consequently, the timid souls who fail to ‘step up’ and find a way to match and surpass the intensity of their opponents will often find themselves on the short end of the scoreboard at the conclusion of the game. How the leadership of the culture, primarily the Head Football Coach, views competition and promotes its development within the culture will often determine how successful the participants and the team will be in actualizing their potential. A culture that views “How you run the race” as more important than winning or losing the race will ultimately over time prevail. For, here winning or losing is seen as a natural by-product of consistent excellence or inconsistent fragmentation (Wooden, 2005). How one thinks and acts in relation to oneself and the opponents contributes to the development of a team culture and the ability of the team to play their best. Focusing upon the opponent as “the enemy” and characterizing them as an obstacle that must be overcome leads a team to focus their concerns in the area of becoming better than the referential standard imposed by the opposition rather than a self-imposed standard of excellence that may become less limiting. Moreover, the excellence that is sought after in terms of athletic performance may truly become limited if the team fails to acknowledge the importance of establishing a system of values upon which to base their

development. Hence, this article focuses upon the theoretical frameworks associated with athletic competition and the resultant cultural growth that may occur when the underpinnings of different frameworks are embraced and practiced. Qualitative data collected from interviews with practicing collegiate Head Football Coaches will be reviewed and compared to the theoretical frameworks to assess the practical applications of the theories and the outcomes that might occur should those frameworks be practiced. A summary discussion that presents a model for the use of competitive orientations to build a culture based upon the principles of virtue ethics will also be presented along with suggestions for areas of exploration for future research on this topic.

### *Theoretical Frameworks for Competition*

What is competition? To some, competition is an activity in which one gains at the expense of another (Keating, 1965), where one man's advantage is seen as another man's loss (Reich, 1971). Through this lens, comparison and winning become essential components for examination. This framework of competition (Stoll, Beller, & Lumpkin, 1999) leads one to believe that excellence resides in winning. It is in this attainment of victory that the athlete or team finds excellence and, without its attainment, excellence is limited. In Keating's view, "excellence resides in winning" (Gibson, 1993, p. 46). Tom Morris of the Morris Institute for Human Values refers to this as the "...competitive victory model of the West. In this model, excellence is all about winning--a zero sum game" (Morris, 1997, p. 51) Moreover, "[a]t its clearest, competition in sport is an attempt to secure victory within the appropriate constitutive rules defining the contest and within the rules of decency and fair play. And, since such competition involves winners and losers, it involves participation in the goal of defeating opponents in a zero-sum



game” (Boxill, 2003, p. 108). In the view of the Realist, as a participant in sport, it is expected that you strive for excellence with your own end in mind first. “Your opponent expects only that you fairly pursue your self-interest, not that you are to be interested in his goal, for you cannot be. Victory is the telos of the activity and an exclusive possession” (Feezel, 2004, p. 86). This perspective that competition is about outperforming the opponent can be traced to Ancient Greece. The Greek athlete of the time of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates possessed “[a] fetish for competing; a pervasive, abrasive eagerness for outdoing the opposition in any field of human endeavor” (Spivey, 2004, p.12).

Hence, the modern notion that prevails in many circles of competitive football cultures today has been shaped by these perspectives, and endorsed by practitioners who have set the standards for the current generation of coaches. Highly regarded former Head Coaches Forest Evashevski of Iowa, Earl (Red) Blaik of Army, and Woody Hayes of Ohio State all proclaimed an affinity for the competitive orientation that promoted winning as it’s goal. For Evashevski, “You may as well say of a surgeon that it matters not whether the patient lives or dies, but how the surgeon makes the cut” (Gibson, 1993, p.49). Further, according to Gibson, Blaik maintained that “the purpose of the game of football is to win”, while Hayes contended that “a coach does not go out to build character, he goes out to win” (Gibson, 1993, p. 46).

This Realistic perspective regarding the application of competitive theory is best expressed by current Oakland Raiders owner (and former Head Coach) Al Davis who often says to his troops, “Just win, baby.” This Realistic view of competition has also been referred to as “decompetition” (Shields, 2001). Citing Alfie Kohn from his 1992

book, *No contest: The Case Against Competition*, David Light Shields argues that the competition that Kohn is so vehemently opposed to is not really true *competition*, but a mutated version that promotes outcome over process. According to Shields, “In short, his {Kohn’s} argument is that competition makes one person’s happiness dependent upon another’s sorrow; it trains people to take delight in other’s pain. It psychologically links your agony of defeat with my thrill of victory” (Shields, 2001, p .2). Further, from Kohn’s 1992 work, he states, “Competition by its very nature damages relationships. Its nature, remember, is mutually exclusive goal attainment, which means that competitors’ interests are inherently opposed. I succeed if you fail, and vice-versa...so the failure of others is devoutly to be wished” (p .2). Consequently, a different framework is offered by Shields here; one that views competition in a more cooperative sense. Shields offers this as an alternative view of competition, one he refers to as true competition which is a process oriented activity in which the participants strive together or with each other for the attainment of excellence. “When you strive with someone, you seek to bring out the best in each other through presenting a worthy challenge. You seek excellence together” (p. 3). This description of the competitive process matches closely the Idealistic framework on competition offered by Stoll, Beller, and Lumpkin (1999). If we view competition as in the Idealistic sense; then it is seen as a “mutual quest for excellence” (Simon, 1985, 1991), and we avoid the trap of linking our competence and success to the performance of another. By adopting this Idealistic framework, we embrace the notion that our opponents are “...partners in the test needing and driving {us} to greater heights; more like dance partners than adversaries” (Gibson, 1993, p. 53), helping us to reach new levels of performance by the challenge that their competency provides us. The Idealist is

concerned with establishing a self-referential standard which will serve to guide them regardless of the level of performance provided by the opponent. Hence, the chances of 'playing down' to a lesser opponent or 'being intimidated' by a superior opponent become lessened. Former San Francisco 49er Head Coach Bill Walsh describes this kind of perspective as it relates to competitive football,

In the football arena, competition involves not only winners and losers, it also serves as a meaningful opportunity for the development, exercise, and expression of human excellence...In other words, your focus should be on attempting to demonstrate excellence in all of the ways the game calls for. (Walsh, 1998, p. 20)

The Idealistic competitor is focused upon self-improvement and continuous progress toward the elevation of their standard of performance (Walsh, 1998) while doing so. Further, Jan Boxill summarizes that "...competition when viewed as a mutual challenge to achieve excellence...leads to progress, to respect for others, to friendships, and to excellence. This is the essence of competition" (Boxill, 2003, p. 115).

Hence, this theoretical framework leads us to perceive competition as a pathway to generalized excellence or *arête*. Susan Saint Sing in *Spirituality of Sport* offers that when you achieve *arête*, "...you achieve the heightened state of...grace and excellence" (Saint Sing, 2004, p. 12). Further, *arête* must be considered from the perspective of virtue. For "[v]irtue comes from the Greek word *arête*, meaning excellence. This Aristotelian virtue is defined as consisting of three elements: a) good habits, b) the middle ground between the extremes of too much and too little, and c) a habit that is a firm and settled disposition toward choosing good" (Patterson, 2003). Moreover, "[t]he

Greeks in their pursuit of excellence, strove for beauty as a combination of grace, elegance, learning, poise, and goodness. To the ancients, one could not be beautiful and do ugly acts” (Saint Sing, 2004, p.32). By practicing arête, “[t]he Greek sought to be just in victory, gracious in defeat, but always heroic in the striving” (Gibson, 1993, p.57). Perhaps, with an eye toward achieving excellence through the medium of competitive sport, one should consider arête as a launching pad for this process.

### *Competition, Winning, and the Development of Culture*

Modern collegiate football programs, particularly at the Division I level are designed to produce winning teams that will generate economic and social well being for the community that they represent. Winning teams produce millions of dollars in revenue for their institutions at the top of the Division I food chain. In 2007, the University of Georgia won the Southeastern Conference championship and the Sugar Bowl. By doing so, the team generated a profit for the athletic department of the University that was over a million dollars. Meanwhile, many Division I programs suffered losing seasons and operating losses that approached seven figures. Hence, the pressure upon the administrators and the leaders of these cultures to win and win quickly is often immense. Consequently, corners are often cut and questionable practices engaged in by all within the culture to find the quick fix solution. Personal shortcomings in the "wholistic" development of the athlete are often ignored if the athlete is able to produce athletically for the team. If the player can ‘get it done’ on Saturday, then what he does the rest of the week may be overlooked and often ignored by the coaching staff. For the coach, it may mean the difference between keeping or losing his job. Most recently, Tyrone Willingham of Notre Dame and Mike Shula of Alabama were fired each after three

seasons at their schools, primarily for failing to win enough games soon enough. The teams coached by both men won more games than they lost, however, they failed to win as many as the community they represented felt were sufficient to keep them employed. Yes, the standards for winning are exceedingly high at Notre Dame and Alabama. Nonetheless, the actions of the elite are often mirrored by those who aspire one day to find themselves among the elite. Leaders of cultures of competitive football teams must consider the implications of their actions with this end in mind. Herein lays the dilemma. The coach must decide how to get the most of his charges within a limited amount of time with an eye on long term growth that is indicative of sustained excellence. While attempting to lay a foundation that is process oriented, the coach must be ever-mindful of the outcome oriented nature of his craft. He and his team will be judged primarily by the product that they put on the field. Is the team organized? Do they play hard? Do they play together as a cohesive unit, dealing with adversity positively? And, ultimately, DID THEY WIN?

How does one go about creating a culture that is process oriented with an inclination for establishing generalized excellence (*arête*) through an idealistic perspective that will reflect in the outcomes generated on the scoreboard within the time allotted for him and his team to prove themselves? A foundation of excellence that will endure over time must be established with an eye toward the development of consistency of habit as the cornerstone for the culture. Perhaps this is best reflected in the words and wisdom of Coach Wooden when he offers, “You must define success as making the complete effort to maximize your abilities, skill, and potential in whatever circumstances

present themselves...The score will take care of itself when you take care of the effort that precedes the score” (Wooden, 2005, p. 10).

### *Coaches Views on Competition*

Coaches are all essentially story tellers. This study solicited the details of the stories from ten practicing Head Football Coaches regarding their perspective on competition and their understanding of the application of the Realistic and Idealistic frameworks on competition. Which way did they lean? Were they Idealists? Were they Realists? Did their lens change when the discussion changed course? The interview process involved questioning the ten coaches on their perspective regarding 1) What is competition, 2) What role does competition take in the development of your team culture, and 3) What are the characteristics possessed by a player that you would characterize as a competitor? The interviews yielded a collection of stories, anecdotes, and opinions regarding competition. Many of these varied greatly in content. Nonetheless, some common themes arose that possess implications for the understanding how these coaches view the development of cultures that will promote sustained excellence over time. The coaches were identified by an initial from their name and a number that corresponds to the level at which they coach. Hence, Coach A-1 would have the letter a as the first initial of his surname and coach in Division I.

Competition was seen by the majority of the participants as a process by which one should strive to do their best to fulfill their potential. Competition forces us to “try to be the best” (Coach H-2), is about “being the best” (Coach M-1AA), is a desire to “be first, is where you must “do the best that you can” (Coach G-1), is the “desire to be first, be the best” (Coach B-1). While each of the aforementioned coaches spoke of being or

becoming the best, it is important to note that Coach B-1's reference involves comparison. Coach T-1 echoed Coach B-1's words when he offered that competition is truly "results driven." If one is to be first, then it is presumed that someone must be second and so forth. Further emphasis here was placed upon effort. Competition is about "pushing your limits" (Coach T-1 and Coach B-1AA), it forces us to "match and surpass intensity" (Coach H-2), while always giving "maximum effort" (Coach H-1AA). Further, it was proposed that competition is about self-exploration that leads us to establish new levels of effort and performance. Here competition was seen as a place where we "leave our comfort zone, attempting to do something that we are not sure that we can do" (Coach A-1AA), a place where we might "maximize yourself, maximize your potential" (Coach H-1), finding new ways every day "to earn your keep, earn your job" (Coach G-1). Coach A-1 spoke of courage when he discussed competition. "Competition is about having the courage to give your best so you have the best opportunity to win while being able to live with the results" (Coach A-1).

Competition was seen by all as critical in the development of their team culture. Prominently mentioned among the study participants was the role that competition played in the development of resilience, intentness, and persistence in the culture. Competition "helps us learn how to deal with disappointment" (Coach A-1). Competition was seen as the process which enabled the culture to respond positively to difficult circumstances. It was seen as the catalyst for enabling the team to "learn how to deal with adversity" (Coach T-1) and as a process that "helps us to understand how to deal with adversity" (Coach H-1). By being "provided with consistent challenge" (Coach B-1AA), the group is "forced to step outside the limits of their existence" (Coach H-1) while being "taught

how not to quit if something does not come easy to them” (Coach M-1AA). This process was seen as a method by which the team might identify those who can be counted upon when such difficulty arises. Competition “helps us define who our guys are...it helps us to distinguish the all timers from the some timers” (Coach A-1AA). Competition can help the team to play at a level beyond what they previously believed was possible. For, in order “to be the best, you must play your best against the best” (Coach G-1). Here you can become “goal oriented and create an environment of success” (Coach H-1AA). Therefore, by competing consistently “it can help you understand how good you can be, everywhere...in everything” (Coach H-2). Competition was seen by some as a type of cultural proving ground--“Comparison will eventually enter into it” (Coach G-1), and in some cases the “loser’s are required to pay a price” (Coach T-1). There are some who also saw competition as a methodology to employ to seek a higher ground for the individual and the team. Here, competition was seen as a way to “appreciate the intrinsic nature of our existence” (Coach M-1AA), and perhaps most importantly “build trust within a family” (Coach A-1).

Competitors were perceived almost universally by study participants as individuals who consistently display great effort. They are “always giving maximum effort” (Coach G-1, Coach H-1AA), their “high effort” (Coach A-1) is matched often with a “high work ethic” (Coach H-2) which enables them to “always fight, regardless of the situation” (Coach A-1AA). Interestingly, competitors were seen to be individuals who were “mentally tough” (Coach H-1AA). “tough guys” (Coach A-1) who are “action oriented” (Coach T-1) that “thrive on adversity...displaying great poise under pressure” (Coach H-1). Competitors were also seen by the study participants to be a “dependable,



self-motivated” (Coach M-1AA) players who are always “seeking a challenge” (Coach A-1) possessing “extremely high standards” (Coach H-1). Their “consistency” (Coach G-1), “attention to detail” (Coach H-2) and “high desire to excel” distinguish them as “finishers” (Coach H-1AA). Almost paradoxically, these high achieving tough guys were also assigned the attributes of “humility” (Coach T-1) and “meek and temperate” (Coach M-1AA). One coach singled out the ability of the competitor to always possess a “positive vision” (Coach H-1).

### *Discussion*

As we consider competition as a process by which we might promote cultural success, it is important to consider the relationship between competition and excellence. That is to say, how can competition be used to create excellence? For that matter, what is excellence? What is success?

We have already seen how excellence can be viewed within the context of the scoreboard in the realistic perspective offered on competition. Further, we have identified *arête* as one means of seeking excellence in an Idealistic fashion. Deciding whether or not to embrace competition as an integral part of your cultural development is an easy one. How to embrace competition is the difficult part. Many coaches who are facing the demands that the outcome oriented nature of the business demands aspire to practice within the Idealistic framework; however, fall victim to the Realistic allure of the “quick fix”. That is to say, they will take a player in recruiting when he truly doesn’t fit the standards that have been established for academics, character, and community relations and so forth—because he will fill a need that will help them win. To avoid this trap, coaches must see the power of process that exists in the attachment to the Idealistic

perspective. If we are to choose the concept of *arête* as the excellence that we seek for the culture, then we accept the fact that excellence cannot be compartmentalized; it must be sought and acquired in a generalized manner. It is here that the consistency of action might be spawned that will ultimately lead to consistency of performance during competition. Coaches who want their teams to be great on game day must demand that this greatness exist every day—in everything that the players do!

The definition that the culture accepts as success is truly linked to the goals that they establish for themselves. Goals that are process oriented in nature and focus less upon outcomes tend to have a greater influence on sustained motivation and ultimately performance improvement (Burton & Raedeke, 2007). Hence, the idea that the culture should focus upon an understanding of success as a process oriented activity that is linked to a continual search for generalized excellence or *arête* in all that they do must be viewed as a viable alternative. Coach Wooden's definition of success, the pinnacle of his Pyramid of Success is helpful here: "Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best of which you are capable" (Wooden, 2005, p. 3). Coaches are in an outcome-oriented business. The scoreboard will ultimately determine whether they keep their job or not. The best way to ensure that the greatest opportunity exists for the scoreboard will work in your favor is to become process oriented. Do the little things well...each day...every day. Take care of the details associated with building the team, keeping the focus upon developing excellence and mastery. The focus should not be on the opponent and winning. Winning will take care of itself when you take care of the effort that precedes the contest (Wooden, 2005).

Consequently, we are left to consider what is meant by the term culture in this sense. Pete Carroll, current USC Head Football Coach offers, “Culture is just the mindset that you allow to reside {on your team}...I am trying to create a ‘want to culture’ as opposed to a ‘have to’ culture. Hence, the practices that become accepted over time tend to distinguish the culture. If the culture is to be one that seeks *arête* in terms of performance, this must be sought in all activities that the culture engages in, and in the sense of a quest for individual excellence that ultimately must fuse into collective excellence. What mindset will the coach allow within his culture? Where will the focus be mentally? The outcomes that a coach receives are ones that he has either coached to happen or allowed to happen. Undue concern for the outcome may result in the compromise of the process that is necessary to produce the desired outcome.

It is here that competition can serve the culture well. To become excellent, one must be challenged. Competition that forces the participant to seek new standards of performance that simultaneously promote their growth as a moral agent must be considered as the cornerstone of cultural growth. Bill Walsh offers, “It’s not how good your players are, it’s how many things they can do well that makes you an effective team” (Walsh, 1998, p. 88). This search for mastery should seek to incorporate standards of performance for the group. Here, “[t]he focus on details cements the foundation that establishes a standard of play. The simplest execution of procedures symbolizes the commitment of the players to the organization and the organization to the players” (Walsh, 1998, p. 34). A Realistic approach will provide the coach with some concrete standards that serve to help measure the progress of his team against the opposition. How are the strength and conditioning numbers? How do we stand in turnover margin, sacks

allowed, touchdown/interception ratio and so forth? All of these standards are worthy ones that will promote growth within the culture when they are acknowledged and practiced. However, if the standards are related more to the attainment of personal excellence by the participants in the culture, then the opportunity for the development of strong habits of consistency increases. The Idealistic framework serves to promote confidence--confidence borne from consistent practice and mastery of a worthy skill set. These base-line measures should constantly be revisited and new standards for performance should be established once the old benchmarks have been reached. Through the practice of competition, the quest for excellence against referential standards, both self-imposed and opponent established, the individual and the team can grow and move on the pathway toward *arête*. Appropriately conceived and implemented, these standards will “relate to the respect and sensitivity shown to others and to an appreciation of the roles that each member of the organization fulfills” (Walsh, 1998, p. 35). Ultimately, these standards should be seen merely as an extension of your core beliefs and the core beliefs of the culture. Here the culture must embrace “...values such as respect, loyalty, responsibility, self-discipline and cooperation” (Walsh, 1998, p. 35).

Nonetheless, as coaches move toward the mastery of their craft, enjoying the process of attaining excellence through a continual development of their standards of performance, they must ultimately line up and play. In cultures of competitive football, this is game day. It is here that they meet other competitors, dressed in full battle gear desiring what they want as well--validation of our excellence that can only be granted through the comparative process. The excellence provided by the opponents can serve to

propel the team to heights of excellence that they might otherwise perceive to be unattainable.

Some years ago as a Head Football Coach at a high school in North Carolina, we were faced with the challenge of an opponent who was seemingly unbeatable. They had not lost a game in our conference for ten years, and as we developed as a team, they were the group that we would have to match and surpass in intensity. We viewed their culture as a challenge and were often asked by members of our community what it was that we needed to do to become like this team. This team was the standard that our community viewed as excellent. I often replied that we were interested in becoming something different than they were---something better in our own way. Nonetheless, we watched them with an eye toward establishing a level of attention to the details of our program that would somehow mirror the details that we felt distinguished them. Realistically, we knew that they were the benchmark for excellence in our conference, and the practices that they had been engaged in certainly had contributed to the sustained excellence that they had experienced. How did they deal with strength and conditioning? How did they deal with pre-game? Travel? They were good at what they did, and by studying their methodology we became proficient at what we set out to do---become a better version of what they were in our own way. Ideally, we set self-referential standards that allowed us to develop our own methodology; one that served us well in the comparative phase of competition. It was our attachment to our process that led us to the outcome that we desired. We broke the streak in our third season together, winning 27-7 at their stadium. It was a moment that could not have happened without the challenge that had been imposed by this seemingly heretofore invincible opponent.

The journey that we make toward competitive excellence must be undertaken with an appreciation for the process of self-fulfillment that virtue ethics provides. "The foundation of ancient virtue ethics lies in a personal examination of human experience, the effort of each person to examine his or her life and ask how it is going" (Devettere, 2004, p. 11). Purposefully practiced reflection provides us all with the opportunity to manage the circumstances of our lives for the better. To the ancient Greek, this is our purpose. "The desire to flourish, to live a good life, and to find happiness while we live-- this is what drives Greek ethics" (Devettere, 2004, p. 3).

Hence, as we view the development of our culture of competitive football, perhaps we should turn an ear to the ancient Greeks. Defining our purpose and purposefully practicing toward its manifestation is what we should become. If it is the purpose, or *telos* of our culture to achieve excellence, then we must decide what practices we will engage in to promote this excellence. It is here that competition arises and provides us with an impetus to forge our excellence. If we continually practice with a competitive orientation that is directed toward achieving generalized excellence or *arête*, we will begin to develop narratives that will become the stories of our communal existence that will support our quest for excellence. Ultimately, friendships built upon respect that has been earned through a consistent display of responsibility undergirded by integrity will earmark the culture. Then we might collectively drink from what Susan Saint Sing refers to as the "well within" (Saint Sing, 2004).

I do believe that drawing life from an inner spiritual spring is ancient within us. It is our job and our duty to really tap into it, tell others about it, teach young people how to recognize it, to respect

the hard work it is, to not be lazy about seeking it, to tear at the opportunities to seize it when it is at hand, and to sit back in near worship when we see it being drunk from. Great athletes drink from it. They find a way, a channel to draw it forth, and let it trickle inside. It is the inner well that marathoners sip, so they don't hit the wall. The wide receiver who is running at full tilt and catches the perfectly thrown game winning touchdown pass passed the cup in the huddle before, (Saint Sing, 2004, p.23)

Let us and our charges always be aware of the existence of this well. Let us assume the responsibility of teaching those that we lead how to tap into it. Let us--  
Always Compete!

#### *Considerations for Future Research*

Competition may be used as a means to stimulate cultural growth. This study has shown that practitioners perceive competition as a means by which individual and collective growth may be attained and motivation for future growth may be spawned. If competition activities are organized within the culture as a win/lose event, how does this effect the development of the culture in terms of motivation? Further, how is motivation effected by the institution of competitive activities that are focused upon 'controllable' factors such as effort, punctuality, classroom attendance, assignment completion (on and off the field) and so forth? Finally, do the individuals who are subjected to these activities perceive the institution of them within the culture to be beneficial?

### *Conclusion*

Properly embraced and practiced with the goal of pursuing generalized excellence (arête) in mind, the process of competition can be the catalyst for long term growth within the culture. Successful cultures have shown an exceptional commitment to detail and a consistency of right action over time that has distinguished them as models of excellence for which all to aspire. Cultures that seek this level of performance will be well served to promote excellence within the culture in all that is asked of the participants.

Demanding that a participant be disciplined and assignment oriented on the field and turning a 'blind eye' to the academic performance of the individual will only serve to promote inconsistency and failure within the culture. Each player and coach has the responsibility to identify the standard of excellence that is worthy and attainable for each activity in the physical, spiritual, and cognitive domain. By competitively pursuing these standards, the culture will enhance their prospect for success over time. It is here that competitive greatness may be found--the pinnacle of Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success. Competitive greatness allows for you and your team to "be at their best when their best is needed" (Wooden, 2005). The practice of "consistency, steadiness, and dependability are necessary for the attainment of high performance results and competitive greatness" (Wooden, 2005). May your team always compete and become competitively great.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Realizing Outcomes through the Recognition of Your Beliefs: Winning Reflectively in Competitive Football

#### *Introduction*

Building a football program that will develop the outcomes that will equate to success is a challenging process. The selection of staff, recruitment of personnel, raising of funds to ensure that adequate facilities are provided to train the team and so forth are among the considerations that the Head Coach must face as he embraces these challenges. Still, the ultimate consideration that the coach must consider is the source of his own true motivation and beliefs. Our actions are linked to our thoughts, and our thoughts are merely a collection of our beliefs. When considered from this perspective, the power that is possessed by the coach who is cognizant of this is immeasurable.

Every coach has an idea of what they want their team to look like on game day. Some desire that their teams look confident, others prepared, focused, physical, and so forth. For these desires to manifest themselves through performance on the field, it is necessary for the Head Coach to consciously work toward making this happen. If the team is to realize their goals and maximize their potential, they must have a clear vision communicated to them by their leadership. This vision is linked to what the head coach truly believes is important in life and in football. A vision that is not rooted in true belief will wither quickly and fade from the landscape of intense competition that the game of football demands.

How does one decide what they truly believe in? The process of identifying these beliefs is truly the hard part. Only through purposeful reflection can this process occur. Reflection provides the coach with the opportunity to gain insight into their motivation and the outcomes that ultimately result in their lives from this motivation. By gaining awareness of who they are and who they wish to become they find a blueprint or a map for finding their way to navigate the construction of themselves and their teams. Our existence is a process oriented activity that will ultimately be defined by the habits that we cultivate and practice. And, so it goes for our teams.

Hence, from these beliefs we derive our sense of purpose and the manner in which this purpose may be realized---our practice. The practice of competitive football in the fashion that we believe will promote the greatest amount of goodness for all and the success that we all desire.

This article will describe how this process unfolds and link the theory of virtue ethics to the process. Further, the theoretical constructs of self fulfilling prophecy and neuroplasticity are considered and related to the process. Data collected from interviews from ten practicing college football Head Coaches will be presented, and the information provided from this data are also considered in light of the theoretical constructs to offer suggestions as to how theory might mesh with practice to promote realistic program and player development.

### *Virtue Theory and Success*

Pathways to success are many and varied. Coaches who are charged with the task for planning and actualizing success for their teams must consider what methodology might provide them with the greatest opportunity to build and sustain performance levels

that are consistently growing. Success has been defined many ways by those in the field of competitive sport; however, perhaps no one has captured the spirit of this concept so well as former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden who offers, “Success may be defined as the peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing that you made the effort to become the best of which you are capable” (Wooden, 2005, p.32).

Hence, as the coach begins to plan the strategy by which they hope to attain this level of performance which will result in the collective best, he must begin with the concept of habit and how these habits ultimately will affect the outcomes that we attain. Virtue ethics has its origins in the society of the Ancient Greeks, who maintained that purposeful reflection, deliberation, and consideration must precede action for the action to become worthy. “The foundation of ancient virtue ethics lies in a personal examination of the human experience, the effort of each person to examine his or her life and ask how it is going” (Devettere, 2004, p.11). From this process one may identify what their true rational desires are. These desires will ultimately precipitate actions which will become; for the virtuous, the achievement oriented actions which will lead toward consistent success oriented performance. For, “[a]uthentic virtue and moral character develop when the person begins making his own decisions about how to act and how to live. These decision coalesce into habits that become enduring states of authentic moral character” (Devettere, 2004, p.56). Doing the little things right consistently, while striving to reach potential beyond our self-imposed limitations while seeking excellence through extraordinary effort and preparation is the essence of the ethic of virtue.

What is virtue? What does it mean to be virtuous? Virtue may be defined as a qualitative characteristic that is part of one’s character, something within a person that is

internal, almost spiritual (Whetstone, 2001). Further, virtue comes from the Greek word *arête*, meaning excellence. “*Arête* is the classic Greek term for virtue and is all but untranslatable. *Arête* was for the ancients more likely to be grasped in a person than in a definition. *Arête* is best summed up as how one lived and died in the effort to embody a certain ideal, a quality of existence” (Woodill, 1998, p.9). By pursuing this path of *arête*, one may acquire great strength (mind, body, and spirit) and a heightened state of grace and excellence (Saint Sing, 2004). The man or woman of *arête* is a living example of habits that reflects a commitment to excellence and goodness in a generalized sense.. For, “[v]irtue comes from the Greek word *arête*, meaning excellence. This Aristotelian virtue is defined as consisting of three elements: a) good habits, b) the middle ground between the extremes of too much and too little, and c) a habit that is a firm and settled disposition toward choosing good” (Patterson, 2003). Inconsistency is the enemy of *arête*, for the practice of *arête* demands attention to personal development in all areas. For, “[t]he Greeks in their pursuit of excellence, strove for beauty as a combination of grace, elegance, learning, poise, and goodness. To the ancients, one could not be beautiful and do ugly acts” (Saint Sing, 2004, p.32). Further, “[a]rete has been translated into English as virtue, excellence, and quality. In human beings this concept is often associated with rational behavior, but it also has undertones of efficiency and effectiveness in action” (Gibson, 1993, p.57). Finally, the practice of *arête* as a pathway for generalized excellence can be linked to the purpose of our existence. For, [h]uman existence resides in being an excellent human. To achieve any goal at the expense of the denial of the importance of human excellence is to cease to be humane” (Gibson, 1993, p.58).

Historically, virtue can be viewed in terms of role acquisition and role development. For,

A virtue is a quality which enables an individual to discharge his or her social role (Homer), a virtue is a quality which enables an individual to move towards the achievement of the specifically human telos, whether natural or supernatural (Aristotle, the New Testament, and Aquinas); a virtue is a quality which has utility in achieving earthly and heavenly success (Franklin) (McIntyre, 1984, p.185).

Virtue is truly a question of who we are, where are we going, and how are we going to get there (Woodill, 1998). To understand this journey we must first consider the concept of *telos*. Our *telos* is simply our purpose for living. What is the goal of our life? What do we desire to be the outcome from our existence? Once we have established this premise we may begin to understand how we ought to live to proceed toward this desired outcome. This process involves the selection of a practice to actualize our purpose, the affiliation with a community to support our quest, and the use of narratives to promote personal and communal growth through discourse. Finally, the relationships that result in mentoring one another must be developed to ensure that growth in virtue is taught and emulated by all (Woodill, 1998).

Our *telos* should involve not only who we are and what we want to become, but also---what we *ought* to become. For Woodill, our 'ought' and our 'is' should be intertwined (Woodill, 1998, p.8).

Moreover, our *telos* must not be considered as a matter of chance or fate. Randomness must be rejected and replaced by a purposeful attempt to strive for something of meaning. This dedication to a *telos* requires that we identify a practice through which we might attain this end. Alasdair MacIntyre defines a practice as a “cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate”(Woodill, 1998, p.8). The internal goods that MacIntyre references are the intangible benefits that one receives from affiliation and participation in the practice. These intrinsic rewards are available only to the members of the practice, and are only accessible if the practitioner participates honorably and ethically. Hence, as we formulate our *telos*, we must identify the process through which we might attain the end that the *telos* would have us strive for. In this sense, our practice becomes our methodology by which we live out our experiences.

It is always within some community (that we) learn or fail to exercise the virtues (Woodill, 1998). Hence, as we undertake the quest for excellence we must solicit not only the support of a community but the counsel of mentors who might serve to guide us through the process. For, “...the mentor is the one who participates in virtue in such a way to embody the tradition of virtue, linking the past with the future by guiding initiates” (Woodill, 1998, p.10). Further, effective mentoring and relationship building in the community should be accomplished through the sharing of narratives. Well constructed narratives serve to share the depth and meaning of the details from the experience of participation in the practice within the community. Narratives should convey the importance of and the passion connected to the experience by the teller.

Through this skillful sharing of our stories, we tend to cement the bond of communal existence that will serve to promote the growth toward the actualization of our *telos* that we aspire to. “The skilled sharing of a vision of life’s true end is the acquisition of Christian community. It is to have attained life. The community gained is then a “fellowship of life” (Woodill, 1998, p.31).

### *Excellence, Beliefs, and Outcomes*

The desire to excel is a common theme in all sporting cultures. Coaches constantly exhort their charges to push the limits on what they might become individually and collectively. The ability to ‘make this happen’ is a direct result of what the coach believes in. “Nothing is more important than the dictates of your own personal beliefs” (Walsh, 1998, p.33). Further, a coach should measure success in terms of how well he is able to carry out his responsibilities relative to his beliefs” (Walsh, 1998, p.33) It all must start with your belief system. What you believe in and what is important to you will resonate through your work, and ultimately be manifested in the actions of those that you lead in your culture. Pete Carroll, current USC Head Football Coach offers,

What creates a ‘positive spiral’ are the dynamics of an undying belief system and the relentless pursuit of vision and direction.

People don’t see anything other than those beliefs coming through everything I do and say. I totally take the responsibility for that leadership position. I’ve got to live it (Voight, 2006, p.332).

It is the good coach or the good leader who “...creates belief---in the leader’s philosophy, in the organization, in the mission” (Wooden, 2005, p.33). Therefore, as we consider the development of the culture, we must consider the importance of

conceptualizing and ultimately actualizing a philosophy for the organization that originates from your core beliefs and values---a philosophy that will create a sense of mission in the members of the culture.

When a culture becomes mission oriented they assume the participants assume the responsibility for carrying out in practice the philosophy that they have adopted. The development of a well conceived and well articulated mission helps the participants of the culture to gain focus toward task attainment that is linked to desired outcomes. The mission serves to crystallize the belief system into a working model for all to use for organizational development. Further, the use of the mission can serve to galvanize the commitment of all in the culture; removing ambiguity from the process of cultural development. For, “[a] mission statement provides direction and commitment to your values...(resulting in) a mental creation of the desired results” (Covey, 1989, p.55) for the culture. Actions that are not directly linked to outcome oriented results can still be seen as vital to cultural success when they are linked to a mission that may be embraced by all. “Marines do not charge into gunfire or firemen into fire because of a few extra dollars in their weekly paychecks. People give their best when they believe that they are on a mission that matters, connected with a group of like-minded people who are going to make the world a better place” (Simons, 1994, p.183).

It is this sense of mission that can lead the culture to develop the focus and concentration that will ultimately lead to sustained success. It is purported that “[a]n organizational mission statement that truly reflects the deep shared vision and values of everyone within that organization creates a great unity and tremendous commitment for all in the culture” (Covey, 1989, p.143). This should be the goal of the culture in creating



their mission. Further, a mission should not serve to inhibit the participants of the culture by confining them to the rigid standards espoused by the mission. To the contrary, a mission should encourage personal growth within collective commitment. A sense of entrepreneurship must be embraced here. “Entrepreneurial success is fueled by creativity, imagination, and bold moves into uncharted waters and visionary zeal” (Collins, 2001, p.11). By adopting a strict sense of discipline that adheres to belief in the mission, and encouraging an entrepreneurial attitude simultaneously, the culture may experience great results over time. For, when you combine a culture of discipline with a spirit of entrepreneurship “...you get a magical alchemy of superior performance and sustained results” (Collins, 2001, p.122).

### *Changing Thought to Action*

What we truly believe in and desire to occur can ultimately be manifested in our actions. Our desires become manifested through conscious choice and a commitment to right action that will support that choice. Our thoughts are constantly occurring. Ultimately these random thoughts become collected in our consciousness as ideas. We ultimately accept or reject the ideas that enter our brain as alternatives for action. This part of our brain has been referred to as our conscious mind (Rice, 2004). Our conscious mind collects information, not unlike a computer. Hence if we view our mind as a computer, we may begin to see how it can be used for our advantage, in terms of developing desired outcomes. A computer collects knowledge in terms of the input that you choose to enter into it. Similarly, our brain collects information in terms of the ideas that enter into it. What we choose to store in the computer is what is available to be returned to us. So it is with our brain. Whatever we choose to store in our brain in terms

of what is acceptable thought and ideas is what will be returned to us when we are faced with the choice of making action. The area of our brain where we store our information that we desire to retrieve is referred to as our subconscious mind (Rice, 2004). Hence, as we begin to perceive how to use our belief systems and our missions to drive our choices to achieve desired outcomes, we must consider the power that exists within us in our own minds. "Everything is created twice---first in the mind and then in the physical world" (Covey, 1989, p.99). Hence, if we can commit our minds to the beliefs that will sustain us in our subconscious and discard the thoughts and ideas that are counter-intuitive to producing the outcomes that we desire, then we will increase our chances for success. It is in the power of the imagination that we find the catalyst for this to occur, and the imagination must be stirred by the passion that is verbalized and actualized through the mission of the group. "When you creatively imagine something, you are actually causing it to come into being" (Rice, 2000, p.51).

Hence, we must constantly examine who we are and what we are attempting to become. If the outcomes that we are receiving in our lives and cultures are not what we desire, we must examine our commitment to these beliefs. What actions have we taken that have permitted this inconsistency to occur? Why have we taken these actions? Where have our belief systems broken down? It is this process of reflection and deliberation that can guide the coach back to a course of remedial action that can lead to the development of outcomes that are desired. This course of action requires careful planning. However, the rewards for the culture will be great. For, "[w]e become what we plan... Therefore, we can control our lives by controlling our thoughts" (Rice, 2000, p.185).

*Training the Brain to Produce Desired Outcomes*

Our physical brain is a malleable entity that can be modified to enhance the opportunity for personal growth that may occur through positive communal association. Often when our actions are inconsistent with our professed beliefs it is our emotional nature that has taken control of our existence. The physical brain is comprised of many regions; however, four primary regions serve to monitor our emotional thoughts. The amygdala serves to protect us from danger, and provides us with awareness of danger. The recognition of fear allows us to process quickly whether to fight or take flight when this danger threatens us. Further, the amygdala "...also acts essentially as a memory structure for stored emotions. In this role it influences our unconscious choices" (Tancredi, 2005, p.36). The hippocampus complements the amygdala by regulating the emotions generated by the amygdala. For, ..."the hippocampus in its role as the brain's "governor", works to regulate the arousal and quiescent reactions of the autonomic nervous system and other key parts of the brain" (Tancredi, 2005, p.36). The anterior cingulate cortex provides assistance in the areas of problem solving, conflict resolution, self-control, and error recognition. Finally, the hypothalamus ensures survival of the organism through the control of internal stability (Tancredi, 2005). Any genetic mutations in these regions and the others in the brain can cause problems in the decision making skills of the individuals so afflicted. However, it is critical to understand that biological and genetic influences on brain development and thinking are also affected by cultural and environmental factors. The proper amount of reinforcement or nurturing can alter or enhance one's neurological predispositions. The continually changing nature of our brain wiring is referred to as neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity is defined as, "The ability

of the brain to adapt by growing new neural connections or by eliminating old ones...” (Tancredi, 2005, p. 214). It is here that we find the hope that will permit us to press on in our quest for personal and communal development of the moral goodness that must be our goal. For, “neuroplasticity is what we can use to build moral strength through positive experiences and training” (Tancredi, 2005, p.45).

Further, as we consider the populations of young athletes that we serve, we must acknowledge the power of neuroplasticity and seek to employ it proactively. The moral brain is most adaptable to change during the ages of sixteen to twenty two. Moreover, the impact of environmental influence is most profound during this period of time. As coaches, we often spend countless hours training technique and skill in our charges while neglecting other parts of their development. Some attention is given to the cognitive development of our players; however, little if any is afforded to their moral development. If the purpose of sport encompasses the need to teach individuals how to stretch the limits of their potential, then we must learn how to engage our brains holistically through the use of this plasticity.

#### *Data*

The majority of the coaches in the study expressed beliefs that related to the development or practice of values to promote cultural development. The importance of trust as a cornerstone in building the culture was mentioned by three coaches. Coach A-1 expressed a desire to build “...a system or culture of trust...a count on me system” in which all could expect the support of each other when adversity strikes the organization. For, as Coach A-1 said, “...adversity will happen in football and we will need each other to persevere”. Further, insight was volunteered by Coach B-1AA when he offered,

“...when things are not going well, you must be solid---you must not seek change when things go wrong---you must believe in each other and what you do!”. This implies that a great degree of trust in each other must be established for the culture to persevere when challenged. Coach T-1 spoke of asking for the trust of his players while he went about the practice of earning it through the consistency of right action over time. Moreover, Coach B-1 spoke of the importance of being genuine with his players. He expressed that “...having standards such as honesty, and integrity” were important here; in that, the players will know when you are not living out what you are asking them to do.

Coach A-1AA and Coach G-1 centered the conversation around the importance of finding good people. They both believed that cultural growth is centered around the type of people that you have in your program. Coach G-1 offered, “We may not always get the best players; however, we can always get a great kid”. “We must find good people” (Coach A-1AA).

Great people seem to connect to something bigger than themselves---bigger than than their own self-interest. Two of the coaches interviewed professed a desire to find and cultivate a sense of caring for others in their players. Coach G-1 said that he felt that “...it’s important to find kids who care more about others than they do themselves”. Further, Coach T-1 described the importance of getting “...everyone caring about each other as much as you can”. “We seek players with heart and a competitive nature who go beyond passion to love in their approach to the game and each other” (Coach A-1AA). When a culture that cares for each other is established, then the group may demand more of each other. For, “...the harder you can be on your kids, the better results you can get--- only if they know you care” (Coach T-1).

Finally, the belief that it is essential to identify core bedrock values (Coach H-1) that clearly identify who you are (Coach H-1) will give you the opportunity to establish a great culture. By consistently displaying a superior work ethic (Coach H-2, Coach A-1AA, and Coach G-1) you can build this culture within the value structure established to attain and sustain excellence.

Ultimately the culture will produce results that will manifest themselves in terms of what the individuals who participate in the culture will take away from their experience with the culture.

What will the culture that is linked to these aforementioned belief systems that are mission oriented look like when they compete? The majority of the coaches interviewed mentioned the importance of displaying great effort while competing. It was seen as important to “play with tremendous effort” (Coach B-1), “play hard” (Coach B-1AA), and to “hit hard and play hard all of the time” (Coach T-1). Also, it was noted that effort displayed must not be linked to the outcome of the game. It was seen as important that the team “Compete---no matter what the scoreboard says” (Coach T-1). Further, Coach G-1 offered that he “...would like for someone who watched our team play to say that was the hardest playing football team that I’ve ever seen play”. In addition, Coach G-1 said that it was important for his team to not become “scoreboard guys”; players who expend different levels of effort contingent upon the score of the game. That is, they will avoid playing hard while ahead and in a dispirited fashion when behind.

The importance of displaying great sportsmanship was also noted by Coach G-1. “I want our team to play in a sportsmanlike manner. Playing in a sportsmanlike fashion is not being soft. Helping a guy up after you knock him down is okay...I would like people

to say that they have watched a pretty sportsmanlike team after they watched us” (Coach G-1). Coach H-1AA offered a similar perspective. He would like for his team to “...carry themselves the right way...not throwing their hands up in the air when things don’t go well...when you do that you are attempting to deflect blame from yourself and put it on others...no throwing of the helmets on the sideline when you are challenged by a coach...no yelling and screaming at teammates when there is a blown assignment” (Coach H-1AA). Moreover, Coach H-2 maintained that it is important for his team to play like “...a group that does things in a sportsmanlike fashion; avoiding the self-adulation that is currently seen all too often in football” (Coach H-2). Finally, Coach M-1AA stressed the importance of his team displaying “excellence in all they do...in the performance of their conduct and sportsmanship...displaying humility in victory and defeat” (Coach M-1AA).

What will the end result be for the participants be who participate in cultures that are belief and mission driven? The process should leave the young men “better off for their experience with the program” (Coach H-2, Coach A-1). This experience should help the participants to “...understand and engage in the process of transformation...through transformation you become something...you don’t do something” (Coach H-1). The experience should provide an opportunity to “learn the life lessons...that it is important to become good men” (Coach M-1AA), and that “it is important to behave well and act well everywhere...not just in football” (Coach G-1). The ability to persevere when confronted by adversity was cited (Coach A-1AA, Coach A-1), as was the ability to leave with a sense of caring for others (Coach T-1), an “understanding of what it means to be a

leader” (Coach H-1AA), and an ability to “identify what is important to them” (Coach B-1AA)

Still, the elephant that is in the room that no one wants to acknowledge in a discussion of this nature remains---what about winning? “Winning is important---never lose sight of that” (Coach G-1). “I believe in winning” (Coach A-1). Finally, “Winning is the name of the game” (Coach B-1). “Making your players nice, moral, and ethical and all of that is important---but---you’ve got to win” (Coach B-1). Further, “Duke fires a football coach a football coach every four years---because they don’t win! They don’t fire a football coach every four years because he doesn’t graduate his players...administrators say they want you to graduate a large number of players---that is true and it is a good thing, but if you don’t win---they don’t care how many players that you graduate” (Coach B-1). Hence, the pressure of winning undoubtedly will affect the development of all cultures and the role of winning in the development of the participants as moral agents who aspire to generalized excellence must be addressed.

### *Discussion*

Competitive football programs are designed to develop pride and create financial gain for the institutions that they represent. Whether it is through the accumulation of income through the Bowl Championship Series, revenue sharing of bowl game proceeds from their representation by conference members, representation in the playoffs at the Football Championship subdivision, the increase in applications and increase in enrollment due to success experienced by the program and so forth, football is expected to be a highly visible economic engine that can produce to the overall financial well



being of the university. Hence, a strong emphasis is placed upon winning and developing a competitive culture that the university community can embrace.

Often, football programs seek to develop excellence in terms of winning without laying the ground work necessary to support a foundation for consistent success. Looking for the 'quick fix', programs will often ignore the importance of developing the individuals within their culture as excellent people first and excellent players second. Often transgressions that don't directly relate to the performance of an individual on the field are overlooked in order to keep the key player on the field. Why? Because, it is important to win---early and often!

The ability of a program to win consistently is linked to their ability to embrace consistency in all action that they undertake. Inconsistent fragmentation in lieu of consistent practice of defined habits that are linked to cultural success will result in erratic performance and often loss in terms of the scoreboard. The pathway to winning lies in the understanding that winning or losing is a byproduct of the action that you consistently undertake in terms of preparation for competition. For, the culture should, "...focus on the process instead of the prize...The score will take care of itself when you take care of the effort that precedes the score" (Wooden, 2005, p.10)

Hence as we consider what path for a program to take to develop sustained excellence over time we must seek to define the process by which this success might be manufactured. Becoming concerned with personal and cultural excellence that is self-referential and not concerned with the efforts of others outside the culture allows the group to set standards of performance by which they might redefine their performance for the positive over time. Further, a commitment to right action and excellence in all that

they seek to do (arête) will provide a consistent methodology by which they might approach all that they do. By doing so, the ability to physiologically affect positive change in the plasticity of the brain and psychologically influencing the thought patterns that might ensue resultant with this change, the group may become more likely to experience success---Success defined as "...the peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best of which you are capable" (Wooden, 2005, p.32). This process oriented activity begins with the understanding of what you truly believe in related to the process. What values drive your culture? What do you feel is critical to the essence of your culture? What can your group count on over time to be their bellwether as they face competition? If the cultural development is placed solely upon outcome, the tangibles and intangibles that will permit the group to persevere and sustain when confronted with adversity cannot be depended upon to surface when needed. An embracement of an ethic of virtue that supports right action in terms of a relentless pursuit of excellence in what your culture does is the key. Deciding what you believe is essential and what mission you define to actualize these beliefs must become your task.

#### *Considerations for Future Research*

The development of a mission for the culture should be a communal effort. Are teams that undergo this process collectively more inclined to adhere to the mission during the course of a campaign than a group that is offered the mission as a dictate from the leadership of the culture? Further, can the mission be used as a source of information when seeking clues as to what might be lacking in the development of the culture when the desired outcomes are eluding the culture? Finally, can the use of standards of

performance (Walsh, 1998) be used as a means of identifying key measures that will promote desired outcomes over time within the context of the group's mission?

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Ethical Toughness: The Virtue Driven Approach to Becoming Mentally Tough

#### *Introduction:*

All coaches want their teams to be ‘mentally tough’. This intangible quality is often the one missing ingredient in the athlete or the team that the coach is desirous of attaining. When an individual and a team are mentally tough, they will be able to perform at a high level when there is great stress in the situation at hand. When the outcome of the game is to be decided, they must be able to summon the mental strength to activate the skills that they have mastered during preparation. Hence, the ability of the team to play their best when their best is needed often distinguishes the winners from the losers in competition.

Mental toughness is an elusive concept. Many definitions exist in the literature that offers insight into what it truly means to be ‘mentally tough’ in athletic competition; However, there are four common characteristics seem to resonate when considering ‘what does it mean to be ‘mentally tough?’ An individual or a team that is mentally tough displays an exceptional ability to 1.) Develop and maintain focus and concentration, 2.) Remain persistent, intent and determined when facing adversity, 3.) Possess a high tolerance for frustration, 4.) Display high self-confidence and self-efficacy (Hammermeister, 2007). Disagreement exists as to the importance of these characteristics in defining the mentally tough competitor. Coaches regard concentration as the most important characteristic, while athletes regard perseverance as the most important (Fourie and Potgieter, 2001). Nonetheless, the seven attributes suggested by Jim Loehr in his

defining work on mental toughness in sport in 1986, maintains that mentally tough performers are disciplined thinkers who respond to pressure by remaining relaxed, calm, and energized (Loehr, 1986). Further, Loehr sees mental toughness as the ability to consistently perform toward the upper range of your talent and skill regardless of the competitive circumstances (Loehr, 1993).

The linkage of self-confidence to mental toughness is inescapable. The ability of the player and the team to remain focused, intent, concentrated, persistent, remain calm, consistently perform toward the upper range of their talent and so forth can only occur if they are able to squelch the self-doubt that often creeps in to the psyche of the competitor when the outcome of the game is to be determined. The individuals and the teams that remain confident and sure of their skills when the game is on the line are often the individuals and the teams that prevail in the end. How do players and teams develop this self-confidence? Understanding self-confidence as it relates to sport performance begins with an understanding of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982). Self-efficacy refers to the inherent perceptions that individuals develop about themselves regarding task completion. When an individual perceives that they possess the requisite skills to master the task at hand, they will persist and diligently pursue task completion regardless of the adversity encountered (Bandura, 1982), Self-confidence in sport refers to an athlete's realistic belief or expectation about achieving success (Burton and Raedeke, 2007). Hence, confidence is primarily linked to past experiences where success has been experienced or practice experience that can be realistically expected to generalize during competition.. A player and a team must earn the right to be confident through how they prepare. The key to preparation is the consistent practice of right action. If a quarterback

is being trained to correctly throw a quick game pass that must be released in 1.6 seconds, then he must address the pre-snap read that will allow him to accelerate his post snap read which will in turn allow him to locate the target quickly. All of this must occur while he is contorting his body in a fashion similar to a second baseman or a short stop 'turning' a double play. This all occurs because of intense repetition and commitment to the cognitive and physical techniques necessary to master this skill. Consequently, when it becomes time to perform this skill it is essential that the performance be flawless, the player should be equipped to perform. To eliminate the self-doubt that might creep into the mind of the athlete is the job of the coach.

How can the coach get his team to remain confident? What is the relationship of confidence to the actions that are taken by the athlete during practice, away from the practice field, in all that they do in their lives? Adherence to virtue theory is a commitment to excellence. *Arête* or generalized excellence is the ultimate virtue that the ancient Greek athlete/scholar embraced. This penultimate virtue was a synthesis of honorable behavior, rooted in integrity, responsibility, respect, and justice that coalesced into habit over time (Devettere, 2004). When strong habits have been formed, they can be automated instantaneously in times of stress to help achieve desired outcomes. A practice of inconsistent action; dichotomous excellence if you will, will only serve to promote inconsistent action which will lead to self-doubt and anxiety when difficult circumstances arise during competition.

### *Theoretical Constructs of Self-Efficacy and Self-Confidence*

Self-Efficacy refers to the attribution that individuals ascribe to their competence relative to task completion. There are four sources of self-efficacy: performance

accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological state of being (Bandura, 1986). All of which influence the expectations and the ability of the individuals to perform specific tasks required of them. “People avoid activities that they believe exceed their coping capabilities, but they undertake and perform assuredly those that they judge themselves capable of managing” (Bandura, 1982). Further, these perceptions tend to shape the thoughts and emotions that arise when individuals face environmental challenges that arise during sport competition. Performance can suffer when individuals perceive the demands of the task to exceed the capabilities that they possess for task completion (Beck, 1976; Lazarus & Launier, 1978; Meichenbaum, 1977; and Sarason, 1975). Consequently, attention may be diverted and action may be abandoned when difficulty presents itself to those who possess limited self-efficacy. However, individuals who possess strong self-efficacy will “...deploy their attention and effort to the demands of the situation and be spurred to greater effort by obstacles” (Bandura, 1982). These are the individuals who become self-confident. For they will persevere and ultimately conquer obstacles that the less assured will fail to master.

The ability of an athlete to develop self-confidence from self-efficacy begins with the accumulation of a consistent performance history. However, an anticipatory feeling about future task completion affects confidence as well. Therefore, how an individual prepares in conjunction with what they have successfully done in previous competition is the essence of their true self-confidence. Self-confidence then may be considered as “...an accumulation of athlete’s unique past achievements across many different tasks and in a variety of situations, coupled with their preparation for the upcoming event, which results in the development of specific expectations about achieving future success”

(Burton & Raedeke, 2007). The top three of the nine sources of self-confidence cited by the 500 athletes in Robin Vealey's 1998 study on the sources of sport confidence support this contention. Mastery, demonstration of ability, and physical/mental preparation were considered to be the most important sources of sport confidence in the study (Vealey, 1998). Ultimately "...a highly stable form of confidence that has developed slowly over an extended time period until it has become a personality predisposition" (Burton & Raedeke, 2007) should be attained by the participant.

### *Virtue Theory and Self-Confidence*

Virtue theory as defined by the Ancient Greeks is the commitment of one to strive for the thought and action that will promote "...a desire to flourish, to live a good life, and to find happiness while we live" (Devettere, 2004, p.3). The three major defining characteristics of happiness that the Greek virtue culture embraced were 1.) Happiness in life results from our choices. 2.) Happiness requires deliberation and reasoning 3.) Happiness requires good character---you must reason well to make good choices (Devettere, 2004). With this mindset, "...practical reasoning and not hoping for good luck becomes the key for achieving happiness in virtue ethics" (Devettere, 2004, p.55).

Authentic virtue and moral character develop when the person begins making his own decisions about how to act and how to live. These decisions coalesce into habits that become enduring states of authentic moral character. (Devettere, 2004, p.56). Further, character virtues differ from intellectual virtues---intellectual virtue acquisition facilitates character virtue development which is the result of consistent development of habit---formed from intellectual choice.



This fusion of virtue; intellectual and character should lead one to seek and acquire *arête*. *Arête* from the Greek has been translated as virtue. Hence, we may view *arête* as the ultimate virtue, perhaps the perfect combination of the intellectual and character virtues which allow the individual to function at the highest level possible. Susan Saint Sing in *Spirituality of Sport* offers that when you achieve *arête*, "...you achieve a heightened state of ...grace and excellence" (Saint Sing, 2004, p.12). Further, "...virtue comes from the Greek word *arête*, meaning excellence. This Aristotelian virtue is further defined as consisting of three elements: a) good habits, b) the middle ground between the extremes of too much and too little, and c) a habit that is a firm and settled disposition toward choosing good" (Patterson, 2003). This excellence can also be viewed as a form of effectiveness and efficiency in action in a humble and gracious fashion (Gibson, 1993). The man or woman of *arête* is balanced; mentally, spiritually, and physically (Saint Sing, 2004) and welcomes the hard struggle. The Ancient Greek term *agon* explains the commitment to *arête* that the Greek possessed.

The earliest attempts to explain *agon* takes us back to the Homeric Greeks where sport...emerged from a life ethic that embodied man's struggle within life for personal excellence. Throughout life, man sought the opportunity for victory through the struggle provided by the contest or battle to achieve *arête*—the Greeks conscious ideal of perfection" (Thomas, 1983, p.85)

The defining characteristic of authentic moral virtue is intellectual virtue--wisdom or prudence. Still, these virtues are not necessarily actions but psychological states; psychological states precede action. For, "...taking pride in the development of authentic

character virtue is appropriate and it strengthens the other virtuous dispositions in our life (Devettere, 2004, p.77). By strengthening these dispositions, the opportunity to engage in actions that are synchronous with these dispositions will appear.

### *Neuroplasticity and Moral Development*

Neuroplasticity refers to the ability of the brain to adapt or change its genetic patterns to accommodate new patterns of thought. This genetic re-wiring results in the support system for the perpetuation of the new patterns of thought and ultimately the manifestation of these thought patterns in action. Scientifically speaking,

...neuroplasticity refers to the ability of neurons to forge new connections, to blaze new paths through the cortex, to even assume new roles. In short, neuroplasticity means re-wiring of the brain (Schwartz & Begley, 2002, p.15). .

Therefore, our brain assists us in the formation of our belief systems. What we believe in becomes the essence of what we do. For, if we espouse to believe something and do something else, then truly we did not believe in the premise that we disavowed by our contrary action. How do we arrive at these beliefs? Perhaps it is because of our instinctive reaction to events which is interpreted by our brain; almost as a reflex (Gazzinga, 2005). To perceive our belief systems as a result of our reactions and instincts and their interaction with the left hemisphere interpreter of our brain is to deny our reflective nature. Through careful reflection and consideration of the circumstances of our existence we may form belief systems that help us to create realities that we desire. Our brain's "...left hemisphere...includes a special region that interprets the inputs we

receive every moment and weaves them into stories to form the ongoing narrative of our self-image and beliefs” (Gazzinga, 2005, p.148). The power of this reality is immense. We possess the ability to create our moral and ethical selves by using the gift of this ‘great interpreter’. Further, “[t]he left hemisphere interpreter is not only a master of belief creation, but it will stick to its belief system no matter what” (Gazzinga, 2005, p.149). Consequently, if we seek, find, and reflect upon our existence from a moral perspective we possess the power to create realities in our actions from these belief systems. It is here that the brain and the mind may act in concert to create the perspective of virtue that can ultimately lead to the development of self-efficacy and true self-confidence in competition. For, “...the observer and his attention are intrinsic and unavoidable parts of reality” (Schwartz & Begley, 2002, p.19).

Moreover, this plasticity is competitive. “The competitive nature of plasticity affects us all. There is an endless war of nerves going on inside each of our brains. If we stop exercising our mental skills, we do not just forget them; the brain map space for those skills is turned over to the skills we practice instead” (Doidge, 2007, p.59). Moreover, the process of plasticity is not limited to learning. The process of unlearning must be utilized to achieve desired changes in plasticity. “The science of unlearning is a very new one. Because plasticity is competitive, when a person develops a neural network, it becomes efficient and self-sustaining and, like a habit, hard to unlearn” (Doidge, 2007, p.116). If we are to use this plasticity for our benefit to forge an existence that has meaning and promotes moral growth for all, then we must acknowledge our responsibilities here. Unlearning is critical, for “[i]f we only strengthened connections, our neural networks would get saturated. Evidence suggests that unlearning existing

memories is necessary to make room for new memories in our networks” (Doidge, 2007, p.117). Hence, if plasticity is to be seen as a pathway to forge an ethical existence then we must actively undertake processes of unlearning concurrent with the process of learning. Utilizing the power of a strong environment and availing ourselves of the process of cognitive dissonance provides an advantage for us here to simultaneously gain positive learning experiences and unlearn experiences that serve to inhibit our existence as we seek excellence.

Finally, we must consider the power of imagination. Our brain will believe what we choose for it to believe. In this context, we must see imagination as more important than willpower to us in the development of our moral selves (Rice, 2004). The work of Alvaro Pascual-Leone demonstrates that we can change the anatomy of our brain through the use of our imagination (Doidge, 2007). His work with trans-cranial magnetic stimulation enables us to see that our neuronal connections can be rapidly established through the use of our imaginations. However, to sustain them requires diligence and practice. Nonetheless, once established after this immersion, they become powerful regulators of our thought and action. Pascual-Leone offers: “The mental ‘tracks’ that get laid down can lead to habits, good or bad...once we have created these tracks, they become ‘really speedy’ and very efficient at guiding the sled down the hill” (Doidge, 2007, p. 209). Hence, we must acknowledge the power that we have individually and collectively to raise consciousness toward a higher moral plane of existence for all. In modeling and acting morally, we will serve to galvanize the tracks that we have laid down, and begin to help others to reflect and consider the benefit of constructing tracks of their own.

*From Theory to Practice*

Ten practicing college football coaches were interviewed on the subject of mental toughness. The coaches interviewed were all Head Football Coaches at their institutions. Four of the ten were employed at Division I institutions, five at Division I-AA schools and one coach was employed at a Division II school. The coaches had all been successful in developing programs that had attained success in terms of generating positive outcomes for their communities; in many cases both on and off the field. The coaches were asked a series of open ended questions that asked them to 1.) Identify what mental toughness is, 2.) Describe the role that mental toughness played in the development of their team culture, and 3.) Describe the characteristics displayed by someone that they considered to be 'mentally tough'.

Mental toughness is viewed by many of the coaches in the study as something that occurs as a consistently in the actions engaged in by the participants in an organization. Mental toughness is about doing something "all the time" (Coach A-1, Coach T-1, Coach A-1AA). Displaying mental toughness involves an "all the time competitiveness (Coach A-1), asks you to "prove yourself everyday" (Coach T-1), requires one to "step up every day" (Coach A-1AA). Further, mental toughness is about distinguishing "your all-timers from your some-timers" (Coach 1-AA), the display of "consistency more than anything else" (Coach B-1AA).

Adversity is a key component to the development of mental toughness. By some mental toughness was seen as an ability to "overcome adversity" (Coach H-1AA) and "being resilient" (Coach H-1AA). In this respect, mental toughness is seen as "finding a

way to get it done” (Coach H-2). Here, you must “stay true to your foundation—no matter what” (Coach H-1), “handling your assignment under adverse conditions” (Coach B-1).

The perspective that one assumes relative to task completion is considered to be critical in the understanding of what mental toughness is. Mental toughness is considered to be about “being positive” (Coach H-2, Coach A-1AA, Coach H-1-AA). For, “positive energy is a great driver of mental toughness” (Coach A-1AA). Mental toughness is “really about beating negativity” (Coach A-1AA).

Mental toughness was seen as a process rather than an outcome by some. “It’s about doing your job every day” (Coach A-1AA). In this manner, “you must prove yourself every day” (Coach A-1AA). Further, this process requires that the participants “persevere for a duration...developing and maintaining hope...building and sustaining a high level of faith” (Coach M-1AA).

Finally, mental toughness was seen as simply the ability to prepare well. “Too much is made of this mental toughness deal” (Coach G-1). “Mental toughness is something you prepare for...being mentally tough is more about preparation than anything else” (Coach G-1).

Mentally tough individuals were seen by a sample of the population as result oriented individuals who “find a way to get things going...find a way to get things done” (Coach H-2). These individuals are the “guys that get it done, no matter what” (Coach A-1AA). Further, mentally tough players are seen as goal oriented, vision directed purposeful participants. For them, “no obstacle is too tough” (Coach G-1). They are “aggressive, proactive in all ways...physical, mental, emotional” (Coach H-1AA) and

“lead by performance when things get tough” (Coach B-1). In addition to “developing and maintaining a strong vision” (Coach H-1), they display “a unique mixture of heart and desire tied to goals and aspirations” (Coach M-1AA). These are the individuals who “don’t let themselves get down” (Coach G-1), always asking themselves “what is the next challenge?” (Coach G-1), while “looking to help their teammates to be better” (Coach G-1).

Finally, these mentally tough participants “enjoy the struggle” (Coach T-1) that difficult circumstances provide, realizing that “the growth does not occur on the mountain top, but in the valley—this is where the vegetation spawns—the lowest ebb—where you struggle is where you will find the seeds for the growth of the mentally tough” (Coach T-1).

The ability to generate situations where mental toughness can be purposefully developed is undertaken by all in the study. Competitive oriented one versus one situations can lead to this desired outcome. “All one on one situations help you identify who is competitive and mentally tough...all eyes are on you when you do this” (Coach A-1). By “creating experiences where you have to compete against an opponent who is better than you are” (Coach G-1), you can build the “physical toughness that will help you to build mental toughness” (Coach G-1). Further, these types of drills will help to teach that “mental toughness involves not being afraid to fail...not being afraid to lose” (Coach H-1). Ultimately, “you must create an environment which challenges guys to do things that they think they can’t do” (Coach H-1AA).

The process of developing mental toughness in the culture was also seen as an attempt to “cultivate maturity—you want your team to become as mature as they can”

(Coach G-1). However, “having older guys doesn’t necessarily guarantee maturity—maturity is developed through experience” (Coach G-1). Learning how to deal with losing here---“you can learn something from losing—recognize what went right and what went wrong—how can you use both to help you improve?” (Coach G-1) is a way to build this maturity.

The truly mentally tough individual will sustain their belief in the culture---no matter what difficult circumstances arise. A purposeful, cultural attempt to demonstrate the link between belief and action can serve to promote the growth of this mental toughness. “Belief is a physical thing...belief means ‘by life’...you must do it if you believe it!...If you are not doing—you are not believing!!” (Coach A-1AA). A constant reminder that this responsibility must be imposed upon the player during training will serve to promote the growth of mental toughness in the individual and the team.

### *Discussion*

Mental toughness is desired by all in competitive football cultures. While the term might assume different meanings to different individuals, the core belief that the management of mental energy is necessary to attain peak performance. Further, toughness is seen by many as an essential component in building a successful culture. Physical toughness is a requisite skill for the player and team to possess if they are to attain success. The corresponding development of a similar toughness that guides the mental nature of the individual must be addressed as well. Many a player is ‘All-World’ in practice, displaying extraordinary physical skill, only to perform in an erratic and substandard fashion when it comes time to tee it up and play against an opponent.



The characteristics ascribed to mental toughness include the ability to remain focused, calm, relaxed, concentrated, determined, persistent, intent, tolerant of frustration, and confident during competition (Loehr, 1986, 1993; Rieke, Hammermeister, & Chase, 2008; Burton & Raedeke, 2007). In every competitive situation difficulty will arise. This creation of fear, doubt, or uncertainty in being able to manage the skills obtained during preparation is the reason that mental toughness must be developed in the participant and the culture. Only true self-confidence (Burton & Raedeke, 2007) will allow the mental toughness necessary to survive and thrive during difficulty to emerge.

Self-confidence in sport is linked to self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can be described as the expectation that an individual and/or a team will have relative to achieving success for a particular task in a specific situation. Moreover, an athlete or a team will be more likely to persist and remain intent when adversity arises if they possess strong self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982, 1986). Self confidence is built from self-efficacy and is linked primarily to mastery of skill, prior performance, and preparation for upcoming performance (Vealey, 1998). Hence, as one considers how to best become mentally tough, and remain persistent, intent, tolerant of frustration, determined and able to deal with anxiety, fear and uncertainty, one must look to the development of true self-confidence in their players and their teams as the key.

If self-confidence is linked to skill mastery, then one must consider the importance of an ethic of virtue to the development of true self-confidence in sport and the resultant development of mental toughness. To master requisite skills the player and the team must develop a disciplined nature that will serve to guide them to consistently

practice the sub-skills necessary to attain mastery. Developing mastery is a wholistic proposition. “How do you best move toward mastery? To put it simply, you practice diligently, but you practice primarily for the sake of practice itself” (Leonard, 1992, p.17). It is here that the embracement of virtue; in particular the penultimate virtue *arête* emerges. Practicing for a desired outcome; to win, to score two touchdowns, to hit eighty percent of the first serves in and so forth is all worthwhile. However, the ability to practice for the sake of process where excellence is sought in all that is done will best serve the player and team that is desirous of undertaking the master’s journey. Virtue ethics is about the development of thought and action that will merge into habit over time (Devettere, 2004). It is evident; with the recent research in neuroscience, that our thoughts will shape our brain mapping over time (Tancredi, 2004, Gazzinga, 2004, Doidge, 2007, Schwartz & Begley, 2002). If our thinking is driven by an ethic of virtue action that is driven by a consistent quest for excellence will emerge that will promote self-efficacy, self-confidence, and ultimately mental toughness during competition.

### *Conclusion*

As college football becomes more and more competitive and the stakes associated with the outcomes continue to rise, coaches will seek information and training methodologies that will provide them and their teams with a competitive advantage. The development and management of mental energy is an area of exploration that has burgeoned in the last twenty years. The topic of mental toughness is discussed and given consideration by all cultures in competitive football. However, how the culture undertakes the development of this management of mental energy varies widely. There is no ‘cookie-cutter’ solution that exists for this heretofore. As coaches consider how they

might approach this task, a commitment to an adherence of an ethic of virtue must be among the considerations. By developing reflective thought; grounded in values that seek excellence, the participants may begin to build the actions that will ultimately help to realize desired outcomes. Further, the plasticity of the brain that emerges with constant training will serve to support this effort over time; giving the process an opportunity to link closely to the outcomes so desired. By doing so, the enemy of inconsistency that plagues cultural growth can be defeated.

### *Considerations for Future Research*

Player/participant perspectives regarding mental toughness and its application during competition should be solicited. Further, information regarding what players/participants perceive to be levels of mastery should be investigated; linking the results to self-efficacy and self-confidence. Further, an understanding of the association of personality to self-confidence and self-efficacy should be explored. Is personality a driving force in the development of self-efficacy and true self-confidence? Finally, what do players/participants who adhere to an ethic of virtue and a process orientation as opposed to an outcome orientation perceive to be the key determinants in mental toughness, self-efficacy, and self-confidence?

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Forging a New Path---Practical Applications of the Idealistic Perspective

Coaches in cultures of highly competitive football at the collegiate level are faced with a dilemma. It is a dilemma that is not new; nonetheless, the age that we live in has placed new demands upon the coaches who must deal with it. Increased pressure exists in cultures of competitive football to win and win early. That is to say, if you are hired as the Head Coach at an institution that participates at the Division 1 level, it has become increasingly important that you succeed quickly. Further, success here is defined by the scoreboard, and the outcome is the prince of the kingdom while the process is left to assume the role of the pauper.

Modern technology has provided an unprecedented flow of information to coaches that is at their disposal as they try to solve the riddle of cultural excellence. Moreover, access to this information continues to improve with speed and availability, leaving the modern American football coach awash in a flood of information and disinformation. Further, manuals, manifestos and volumes that espouse the latest and greatest on leadership styles and techniques flood the market beseeching the coach to consider the information contained in their volumes. For, should he fail to do so, he will run the risk of being left at the starting gate in the race for competitive excellence.

The football coach of the early twenty-first century manages his organization and culture in the ultimate outcome oriented business in an outcome oriented world. The obvious desire of the administration, fan base and alumni for the coach to provide a winning program for the institution leads the coach to consider how he might manage his

actions to realize this outcome efficiently, effectively (in terms of chronology) and in relation to longevity. Precisely, the dilemma is this: How can the actions of the coach best serve the manifestation of the desired outcome (winning) and still maintain the honor bound integrity of the game; one that links the past to the present. Further, how might the coach manage his actions so that they serve to preserve the traditions and the practice of the game that will ensure that the game will endure and thrive to provide opportunity for future generations to realize their personal and collective greatness?

The current model of coaching tends to ignore the importance of developing a culture that will promote excellence for all. Too much emphasis is placed upon development of the individual team that the coach is responsible for and not enough focus is centered upon the resultant implications of those actions upon the others who participate in the process with the coach and his team. Too much is made of developing greatness from within and not enough focus exists upon developing greatness in the opponents, the game, the tradition and the practice.

What is the role of the coach in terms of his relationship to the player? Certainly, the player wants to be successful---to play on a winning team, Further, they assuredly desire that their role on the team be as expansive as possible, and that the opportunity make meaningful contributions to the success of the team be linked as directly as possible. They want to play and make a difference. To promote the development of the player to achieve this end, the coach must consider the development of the player in a wholistic sense. Only then might the player develop the consistency necessary to achieve the greatness that he so desires.

For the player and the team to become successful (once again winning) they must learn how to compete. Competition is a term that is used extensively by practicing coaches in the development of their team cultures, and it offers different meaning and context to most all. Many coaches refer to having a ‘competition day’ where all the drills that are scheduled for practice on that day are competitive ones—where there is a winner and a loser. The results of these practices are often shown to the team the next day in the meetings that precede practice to honor the ‘winners’ and to surreptitiously disparage the losers, seeking to motivate them for the next time, so they may end up on the reel as the ‘winner’ rather than the ‘loser’. I often refer to these sessions as comparison or comparative sessions rather than competitive sessions. Both sides may certainly perform excellently and the ‘winner’ who outperforms the ‘loser’ in the session in fact might have been at his best ever on that repetition to earn the win. However, more often than not the drill morphs into a chest thumping, trash talking affair where individuals are more concerned with disrupting the performance of their opponent than they are in developing excellence in their own. The idealistic framework on competition sees competition as a mutual quest for excellence (Simon, 1985, Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1999) in which the performance of the opponent is a key to the development of one’s own performance. To beat the best, you must be at your best. Hence, the true competitor here would want their opponent to be at their best, for it would compel him to be likewise engaged to garner a successful outcome. Moreover, in this sense, excellence and winning may be linked, for, the winner truly had to be ‘most excellent’ to outperform the opponent in this case. Here true competition has occurred, and skills that may generalize to the game field have been taught, no coach ever wants their player or team to ‘play down’ to the level of the

opponent. Seeking the higher ground here offers an opportunity to train this skill. Attachment to the realistic framework on competition; where winning is the sole focus of competition—one's gain must come at the expense of another (Keating, 1964, Reich, 1971) causes one to risk affiliation with a perspective that might ultimately promote inconsistency in the development of habit and performance. It is important to understand that winning and excellence here must not be seen as mutually exclusive. Further, it must also be understood that losing and excellence can exist in the same paradigm. The player and the team that maintains a focus upon excellence in the mastery of their practice in time will end up on the long end of the scoreboard.

Arête in the twenty-first century? What are we to make of this quaint Greek ideal; where the consummate virtue, arête is linked to the existence of the true sporting competitor. The man of arête was honorable and excellent in all ways—his physical performance in the arena of competition was only a manifestation of his true inner goodness (Saint Sing, 2004, Gibson, 1993). This goodness had been cultivated over time through an adherence to an ethic of virtue. This athlete lived a purposeful existence with a dedication to their practice, through which they actualized their purpose. Communal affiliation supported this process, and a series of narratives resulted which served to preserve and perpetuate the traditions of the practice that deserved such honor. Ultimately, the man of arête would assume a position of mentorship in which he advised and influenced his successors how to grow the process and practice within the scope and nature of their own talents. How does this differ from the true essence of competitive football. Every man who participates in the process is driven with purpose to do so. There has been a switch flipped in their psyche which enables them to experience euphoric

highs when the process is ‘done right’ and distressing lows when the tradition and practice is compromised and bastardized. These are the highs and lows that they live for—moments that fuel the passion that drives their existence. While wrapped up in winning can cause one to lose this perspective, it still lurks beneath the surface as a driving force to motivate the vast majority of the members of competitive football cultures. The ‘love of the game’ remembering that the game is designed to be fun are all phrases that ring true, and when you watch a team play that special game—they are enjoying playing: Playing together as a community, fast, effortlessly, efficiently, gracefully, and excellently. One might say---with *arête*. These events serve to galvanize the community and result in the sharing and rehashing of narrative of great seasons, games, practices, and so forth. The custodians of these cultures, the coaches, are in effect, the mentors whose trusted role is to guide their charges honorably so they may improve and perpetuate this greatness for others. This idyllic scenario is far from what happens in many modern American collegiate football cultures. Nonetheless, the majority of coaches speak of these actions as if they are an integral part of what they wish to accomplish within their cultures. It is only when these actions seem to get in the way of winning do they bail out and do whatever it takes to ‘just win baby’.

How is one to coach towards an ethic of virtue, an attempt to build a culture that embraces *arête* as a way of life, while still maintaining an eye toward the scoreboard? The leadership of the culture; either consciously or unconsciously, elects to adopt certain leadership paradigms that profoundly influence the outcome of the experience for the players in the organization.



Goals and visions are developed with the idea that the desired outcomes for the group will ultimately occur if a commitment to the established standards of performance for the culture occur. This path for success can be traveled in many ways. The leader may choose to adopt an authoritarian stance; in which the leader dictates the course of action for the group—demanding strict adherence to the norms and expectations of the organization. Little if any autonomy is provided to the members of the culture. They are to do what they are told to do; when they are told to do it. This authoritarian model can serve to motivate the individuals to comply through fear of repercussion should they fail to do so. Transactional leadership offers rewards in exchange for desired behaviors performed can be used as a compliment or as a successor to authoritarian leadership. An attempt to move the group from extrinsic motivation to a more intrinsic orientation can be made through the use of transformational leadership. In transformational leadership, the leader attempts to gain confidence from the group by developing and articulating a vision for collective achievement that is fueled by the passion, personality, and charisma displayed by the leader (Bass 1985, 1999). The leader almost wills the individuals in the group to higher levels of performance through the power of his presence and the power of the vision that he is able to convince them is in the best interest for themselves and the group. Participants are subsequently inspired and motivated to do great things for the team.

All of these paths toward achievement are designed with the goals of the organization in mind first. Excellence in the culture here often fails to match excellence in the individual who is a participant in the culture. Leadership that is follower focused (Patterson, 2003) that is designed to develop the individual participant as an autonomous

moral agent who can think and act consistently in a moral fashion is the goal of servant leadership. Servant leaders seek to meet the needs of the individual in the group first (Greenleaf, 1977), seeking to blend the goals and vision of the organization into the emerging talents of the participants. Servant leaders seek to develop a core of values in the individual participants that are designed to morph into a collective sense of culture over time. Focus upon responsibility, integrity, fairness, respect, fairness/justice and so forth will result in the participants developing an appreciation for themselves, their teammates, their opponents, their game, and the traditions associated with the practice of the game that will ultimately result in a quest for excellence. Old fashioned *arête* used to meet and exceed the demands of the competitive cauldron that is football at the highest level in the early part of the twenty-first century. Impossible? The work of Tony Dungy of the Indianapolis Colts, Lovie Smith of the Chicago Bears, Mark Richt of the University of Georgia among others provides tangible evidence that this style of leadership can be employed successfully at the highest levels of competition in football, and that an adherence to an ethic of virtue can result in the establishment of a culture of values that can achieve desired outcomes (Dungy, 2007, [www.AFCA.com](http://www.AFCA.com)). The most powerful leadership tool at the disposal of the coach is their own personal example (Wooden, 2005). Servant leadership offers an opportunity for the coach to live their vision, cementing a commitment to *arête* that will drive the process. Here, what the coach does should speak so loudly that his words will not be heard.

How does a commitment to servant leadership; in an attempt to foster *arête*, help the culture to achieve the ultimate outcome oriented goal—winning? More importantly, how can it help the participants to play their best when only the best will do? Much is

made in the sport psychology and sport philosophy literature of the concept of mental toughness. Further, practicing coaches frequently speak of the need for their charges to become mentally tough. Often when a team comes out on the short end of the score, the coach will often reference a shortcoming displayed by his team that was mental rather than physical.

What is mental toughness—as it relates to competitive sport and in this case to competitive football? Mental toughness has been defined many ways; however, it's characteristics seem to be able to be summarized in five categories. They are: 1.) An ability to develop and sustain focus and concentration, 2.) An ability to tolerate frustration and persevere when faced with adversity. 3.) An ability to consistently display self-confidence; formed from an understanding and cultivation of self-efficacy. 4.) An ability to remain intent and determined through the process when rewards are not imminent. 5.) An ability to subordinate feeling of fear, uncertainty, and anxiety during competition. Leaders of cultures of competitive football all aspire for their troops to master these qualities. However, the methodology that they utilize to achieve this end is often haphazard and inconsistent.

If the focus were to be placed upon the development of true self-confidence through consistent preparation and an adherence to standards of performance that promoted generalized excellence, then the other desired outcomes might fall in place. Does the organization have standards of performance in place for academics? Are there quantifiable measures for class attendance, assignment completion, progress toward graduation that is linked to the development of the individual and not just the program

and so forth. Further, do these measures extend into the domain of personal growth away from the academic and athletic domains?

What is an acceptable standard of performance for recreational drug use, for performance enhancing drug use, for the use of alcohol, and for the interpersonal relationships between members of the community at large? If excellence is truly to become a habit, practical application of standards of performance that promote personal growth in a generalized sense must be adopted concurrent with the pursuit of excellence in the athletic skills required for competition. It is easier to remain certain, determined, intent, persistent, while avoiding the trappings of anxiety, fear, and uncertainty if one has attained true self-confidence through diligent preparation and a subsequent mastery of a polished skill set that will sustain them in competition.

Here the link to *arête* and servant leadership may be found. The true man of *arête* is fully committed to developing their personal excellence in all that they do. To this warrior, competition knows no end. Doing everything better and better each time that they undertake the task in a moral fashion that promotes excellence in themselves and others is their task. This commitment will ensure that the traditions and practices of their craft will be preserved. Their actions will serve to promote a search for greatness for all and the performance demanded from this challenge will manifest itself on the gridiron. Rather than seeking to humiliate and deflate an opponent through purposeful intimidation, the competitor who practices *arête* will welcome the challenge of the similarly heeled opponent—recognizing that through this challenge they must seek greatness heretofore unattained or they will fall short of achieving their goal of victory.

True self-confidence, grounded in values will be their anchor. The coach who promotes and models this course of action will captain the ship. The voyage will always be adventuresome, with perils emerging as the seas are navigated. However, the right to be called a true athlete and a true competitor will be the reward that awaits the individual who undertakes this journey. For the coach and the team that chooses to embark upon this sojourn, a lifetime of memories await to be made--memories that will only grow greater with age and serve to preserve the tradition that will ensure greatness for those who follow. It is our sacred calling. Spot the ball!

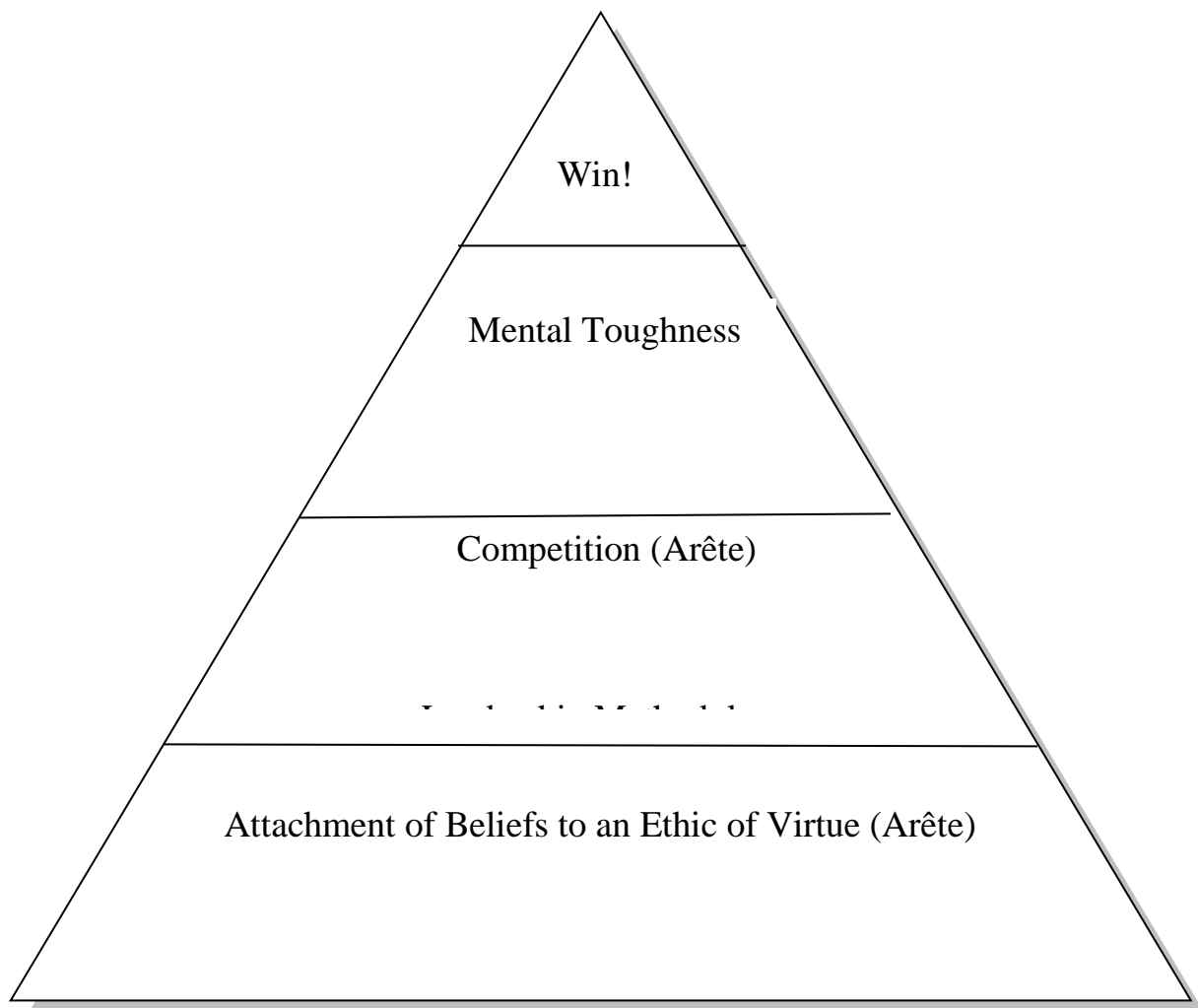
*Applied Implications*

Figure 1 Realistic / Pragmatic Application for Cultural Development



The above model represents the Realistic/Pragmatic Application for Cultural Development that is currently practiced in the majority of competitive football cultures. An emphasis upon winning and activities that are comparison based is established in an attempt to hone the group into a tough fighting unit. To reinforce the toughness of the group, an attempt is made to emphasize competition (often comparison based competition) while seeking improvements in effort and intensity of work ethic displayed. Ultimately a sense of identity will emerge for the team, providing them with collective excellence as the outcome. They become excellent because they win.

Figure 2 Practical Application of the Idealistic Perspective



The above model is an illustration of the Practical Application of the Idealistic Perspective. This model is recommended as an alternative to the Realistic/Pragmatic model that is currently utilized by the majority of the practitioners in the field. By basing the development of the culture on an identification of their true beliefs—grounded in virtue theory—the coach may build toward winning while laying a foundation of consistency and excellence. It is critical that the coach employ a leadership methodology that will promote moral growth and acceptance of the group mission by the participants. Further, it is imperative that the mission be actualized through the practice of true competition in a generalized sense. Finally, the group will acquire true self-confidence and mental toughness as the harvest that is to be reaped after a consistent quest for personal and collective excellence. They win because they had previously become excellent.

## **APPENDIX A**

### Interview Questions

1. What do you believe in?
2. What do you want your team to look like on game day?
3. What would you like your program to be known for?
4. What do you want your players to be able to take away from their experience in your program?
5. What is competition?
6. What role does competition play in the development of your team culture?
7. What characteristics would you apply to an individual that you perceive to be a competitor?
8. What is mental toughness?
9. How do you develop mental toughness in your team culture?
10. What characteristics would you apply to an individual that you perceive to be mentally tough?



## APPENDIX B

### University of Idaho IRB Consent

## University of Idaho

University Research Office  
 Institutional Review Board  
 PO Box 445010  
 Moscow ID 83844-5010  
 Phone: 208-885-6762  
 Fax: 208-885-5752  
 hac@uidaho.edu

To: David Brunner  
 Department of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance  
 College of Education  
 University of Idaho  
 Moscow, ID 83844-2401

Cc: Sharon Stoll, Professor (Faculty Sponsor)

From: Casey Inge  
 Chair, University of Idaho Human Assurances Committee  
 University Research Office  
 Moscow Idaho 83844-3003

IRB No.: IRB00000843

FWA: FWA00005639

Date: September 26, 2008

Project: Creating a Culture of Values that will Promote and Sustain Excellence (Protocol No. 08-063), Approved September 26, 2008.

On behalf of the Human Assurances Committee at the University of Idaho, I am pleased to inform you that the protocol for the above-named research project is approved as offering no significant risk to human subjects.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of this memo. Should there be significant changes in the protocol for this project, it will be necessary for you to resubmit the protocol for review by the Committee.

  
 Casey Inge

## IRB Consent Form for Participants

**Study:** **Creating a Culture of Values that Will Promote Sustained Excellence in Competitive Football.**

**Researcher:** Dave Brunner; Center for Ethics, University of Idaho.

**Major Professor:** Dr. Sharon Stoll; Center for Ethics, University of Idaho.

**Process:**

Ten ‘major college’ Head Football Coaches will be interviewed over the telephone to obtain their perspectives regarding personal philosophies, belief systems, mission orientations, competition, and mental toughness.

**Consent Script:**

Each coach will be offered the following at the beginning of the interview process: “You are about to participate in an interview which will solicit your opinions regarding the development of your personal philosophy regarding the building of your team culture. Further, we will discuss your perspectives regarding belief systems, mission statements, competition, and mental toughness, as they relate to this process. I will provide you with a written summary of the transcript of my field notes from this interview to verify the authenticity and accuracy of the notes.”

## APPENDIX C

### Field Notes

#### *Coach A-1 Field Notes*

#### 1. What do you believe in?

- Winning!
- Trying to build a family atmosphere.
- Building a system or culture of trust.
- Building and developing a 'count on me' system.
- In a family, nothing is perfect—adversity will occur—football is a great model for that—adversity will happen in football and we will need each other to persevere.
- Brothers will watch out for each other when it is 'nut cutting' time.
- Teaching in a positive fashion in which you provide a solution when you provide a reprimand.
- Give the player a solution—don't just recreate the problem for him!
- You must make a player believe that he is greater than he is—within limits—there is a reality check that we must experience here as well.
- Football is a game that is designed for us to have fun!

#### 2/3. What do you want your team to look like on game day? What would you like your program to be known for?

- A group that attacks people instead of a group that allows people to attack you
- Go after people! Play an exciting style of ball!
- A group that is having fun playing!!
- I want us to look like a smart football team.
- I want us to look like we are 12<sup>th</sup> game ready in game number 1. every contingency is covered—we are totally prepared for every scenario in game number 1.
- A physical football team that will play you sideline to sideline—start to finish.

#### 4. What do you want your players to leave your program with?

- I would like them to be a stronger person.
- I would like them to think that they benefited from their experience of playing with us.
- I would like them to say that they had a good time.
- I would like them to say 'I benefited from that'.
- I would like them to become a better decision maker.
- I would like them to become a good father and a good husband.

- I would like them to leave with a skill set that will help them through adversity.

### **5. What is competition?**

- Having the courage to give your best so you have the opportunity to win while being able to live with the results.

### **6. What role does competition play in the development of your team culture?**

- Competition builds the family atmosphere. If a guy sees another guy busting his tail, then maybe he'll appreciate that guy a little more.
- If I model hard work, my partner will see that.
- Competition tells us a lot about the effort level of a player. If a player is giving their maximum effort, then they are not competing!
- Competition helps us understand how to deal with disappointment. It's a little like dealing with death in real life. You are disappointed when you lose, you must pick yourself up and move on—similar to what happens to you when you lose a loved one.
- It helps us understand who we can count on. Who wants the ball in their hands at the key moment—who will show up?
- We use competition drills in practice to foster competitive attitudes.
- Reward the winner—praise the winner—recognize the effort of the loser.
- X and O to get the most competitive guys in a position where they can do their thing.
- Create 1 on 1 situations in practice and games—coach this—1 on 1—we win!
- In life, we are always competing!
- What scares me most about us as a society is that we try to take the scoreboard out of everything we do in life. At some point in time, the scoreboard is going to come on!
- By keeping the scoreboard off, we are teaching kids that it is okay not to compete!

### **7. What characteristics would apply to an individual that you perceive to be a competitor?**

- High motor!
- Play hard guy; try hard guy.
- Guy who always gives his best effort.
- Tough guy (Mental/Physical).
- Ask for the ball guy—seeks a challenge

### **8. What is mental toughness?**

- A guy who will perform when 'all eyes are on you'.
- A guy who will perform all of the time—in practice, in the weight room, when we do our circuit stuff.
- A guy with all the time competitiveness.

*Coach H-2 Field Notes***1. What do you believe in?**

- Faith and family first and foremost
- Your education and your performance in the classroom is second.
- You must ‘give back’ in life—to your community.
- Football must come third behind these priorities.
- Work ethic—you must have a superior work ethic.

**2. What do you want your team to loom like on game day?**

- First class
- Fast
- Physical
- Fine representatives of their families and their schools.
- Like a group that does things the right way.
- A group that does things in a sportsmanlike fashion—avoiding the self-adulation that is currently seen all too often in football.

**3. What do you want your program to be known for?**

- Developing outstanding young men.
- Having young men leave the program better than when they got here.
- Building character in young men.

**4. What is competition?**

- Trying to be the best you possibly can be.
- Not worrying about what the other guy is doing.
- Matching and surpassing the intensity of your opponents.

**5. What role does competition play in the development of your team culture?**

- Obviously it is huge.
- It is what we are about.
- We try to compete everywhere.
- We compete in the community...how good can we be here?
- Same in the classroom...how good can we be here?
- Can I get that C to a B? Can I get that B to and A?
- I remember going to Bojangles with my father...watching a man ‘wear the sideboards’ off the wall as he washed tem. My dad said to me, “That’s how you need to approach your job, be the best at whatever you do”. That is what competition is...being the best at whatever you do...No matter what it is.

- At our Friday walk-thru...I look to see who is locked in...who is competing? Who is concentrated the best? To me, that is competing as well.

**6. What characteristics would you apply to a competitor?**

- Great work ethic.
- Great character.
- Great attention to detail.
- Strong drive and desire to excel.

**7/8. What is mental toughness? What role does mental toughness play in the development of your team culture?**

- You must avoid being a front runner. Players who are mentally tough are not front runners.
- It doesn't matter what situation you are in—you will find a way to get it done.
- Mentally tough players are always looking for the positives.
- Mentally tough players are catalysts...they find a way to get things going.
- Mental toughness means being a positive person.

*Coach T-1 -Field Notes*

**1. What do you believe in?**

- Create the right environment
- Create a family environment as much as you possibly can
- Get everyone caring about one another as much as you can
- Families fight/families struggle--however--families are always there for each other
- The harder you can be on your kids, the better results you can get---only if they know that you care
- You must bring people together
- Diversity is our strength--we must understand this
- We must understand the cultural and social mores of each other
- I must earn the trust of those that I lead--I am going to ask for your trust--over time I will earn your trust

**2. What do you want your team to look like on Saturday afternoon?**

- Disciplined--Highly disciplined
- Intense
- Hit hard and play hard all of the time
- Compete--no matter what it looks like
- Do well in turnovers and penalties
- Do not do selfish things---look like we care about each other---no stupid penalties

**3. What do you want your program to be noted for?**

- Toughness
- Discipline
- We don't beat ourselves

**4. What do you want kids to take away from your program?**

- Caring--sense of family--community

**5. What is competition?**

- Pushing your limits
- Until three years ago--I played city league baseball against 28-29 year olds--I was in my late 60's---that is competing
- I still play one on one basketball--that is competing
- Competition is result driven--there is a score there is a result from your participation
- Compete in everything--academic--sports--political
- I enjoy seeing how we can do against someone else
- I thrive on competition

- I compete when I play with my kids or grandkids

#### **6. What is the role of competition in the development of your team culture?**

- We do all kinds of team building things
- We try to create a situation in practice where there is a winner and a loser
- We try to create situations in which players see that they can overcome adversity
- The loser pays a price

#### **7. Characteristics of a competitor**

- The best don't seem to 'wear it on their sleeve'
- What you do speaks so loudly, I can't hear what you are saying
- I'm wary of highly emotional players---sometimes they seem to be the one's who shrink and shy away from challenges
- Combination of wonderful characteristics that manifest themselves in a number of different ways.

#### **8. What is mental toughness?**

- Being able to continue to work hard---accepting criticism---assuming responsibility in a generalized sense---always trying to prove yourself
- Always put yourself in a state of mind where you must prove yourself
- The idea that you have arrived is the most dangerous idea that you can possess
- Don't let off the accelerator
- Constantly continue to struggle---enjoy the struggle
- The growth is in the valley---this is where the vegetation spawns---the lowest ebb---where you struggle is where you will find the seeds of growth for the mentally tough



*Coach A-IAA Field Notes***1. What do you believe in?**

- there is something bigger than yourself that you must recognize the existence of
- we must connect to something bigger than ourselves
- I am a Christian
- Getting yourself right here gives you a chance to become the best you can be
- It's here you can become at peace with yourself---so you may open up and help others
- We must find good people
- Kids with a great work ethic
- Tough minded kids
- Kids with heart and a competitive nature
- I believe that you have to have a passion for the game
- However, it goes beyond passion to love
- Passion will give you a quick spark
- Love will endure for a career
- You build your program over the long haul
- Technically and strategically it's important for us to do things a little differently
- You must do unusual things to help yourself
- You must constantly find better ways to do better things

**2. How do you want your team to look on game day?**

- Look like they know what to do
- Perform at a high level---with confidence
- I want them to look focused
- I want them to be intense
- Intensity doesn't necessarily imply that you are whoopin and hollerin
- Sometimes we come out like we are at a funeral---yet we are highly focused and intense
- Everyone has a part within the scheme---we want them to look like they understand their role and can perform it to the best of their ability
- We don't talk about winning and losing
- We talk about doing your best
- You have been given talent---it is your duty and obligation to manifest it

**3-4. What would you like your program to be known for? What do you want your players to be able to take away from their experience in your program?**

- Education---on the field and in the classroom

- Commitment
- Loyalty
- Integrity
- Perseverance
- Competitiveness
- Toughness
- The ability to endure and prosper when confronted with ‘strife’
- The importance of these ‘strife’ lessons

**5-7. What is competition? What role does competition play in the development of your team culture? What characteristics would you apply to an individual that you perceive to be a competitor?**

- Competition is the willingness to step beyond your comfort zone to attempt to do something that you are not sure that you can do
- The appropriate display of toughness and physicality
- Believing in yourself enough that you won’t quit even when it seem hopeless to continue
- Making yourself do things you wouldn’t normally do.
- Understanding that you are in a fight. You win or you lose. The fight is 80-85 rounds---every game.
- Competitive guys are the ones that have the toughness to ‘take it’---rather than the guys who can ‘dish it out’
- Competitive guys are not front runners
- Competitive guys keep fighting even when it looks like it’s not going to be their day
- A competitive guy will play the same way when he’s up 50 or down 50
- A competitive guy will play his best when a load of rocks has been placed upon his back

**8-10. What is mental toughness? How do you develop mental toughness in your team culture? What characteristics would you apply to an individual that you perceive to be mentally tough?**

- Mental toughness is the ability to take the good and bad as it comes
- A ‘hang in there’ attitude
- Mental toughness implies stepping up every time!
- Getting hit hard and not backing down
- Never say die
- Not something you learn in a day
- Real hard to develop in a player when he gets to you
- You have a job to do---it’s a real hard job---it’s a real bad job---but you do it---day after day after day
- Answering the bell every day
- Beating negativity
- This is not good!

- This is even worse!!
- This is crazy!!!
- Guys that get it done when those conditions appear
- Being positive
- Being productive
- Positive energy is a great driver of mental toughness
- Consciously work to create cognitive strength
- Define for your team what an 'all-timer' is versus a 'some-timer'
- Belief is a physical thing
- Belief means 'by life'
- You must do it if you believe it
- If you aren't doing---you are not believing
- Our kids believe in what we are doing

*Coach H-1 Field Notes*

**1. What do you believe in?**

- Core bedrock values must drive your team culture
- You must develop a bedrock philosophy that you can rely upon
- You must develop a clear identity of who you are---Joe Ehrman “If the parents don’t have a clear identity of who they are then the kids don’t have a chance of developing their own positive self-image.
- You must tell the kids 1) This is who we are---2) This is where we are going---3) This is how we are gonna get there
- Excellence with class is our theme
- We must seek a balanced quality of life
- We must try to get each other to be successful in the broad scheme of things
- We seek to develop---blue collar work ethic---hard work---taking responsibility---toughness---extending the limits of our comfort zone

**2. What do you want your team to look like on Saturday afternoon?**

- Guys that are having a great time
- Guys that will always play hard
- Guys that are creative
- A team that is cohesive

**3. What do you want your team to take away from participation in your program?**

- I want them to be successful 15 years later
- I want them to be able to understand what success is
- I want them to understand how you get it (success)
- I want them to realize that you must be dedicated to success to achieve it
- I want our program to be a living working laboratory for success in life
- Success should be seen as the ability to control and balance the quality of your life
- Understand and engage in the process of transformation
- Through transformation you become something---you don’t do something

**4. What is competition?**

- All of competition is about maximizing yourself
- The ultimate goal (of competition) is to maximize your potential
- When I was at \_ I always told everyone that the game against \_\_\_\_\_ has got nothing to do with \_\_\_\_\_
- Can I maximize myself so that I can satisfy that guy in the mirror?

**5. What is the role of competition in the development of your team culture?**

- Competition is where we get tested
- When you face adversity how will you handle it
- Competitive situations force us to step outside the limits of our existence

#### **6. What are the characteristics of a competitor?**

- A competitor displays great poise under pressure
- A competitor thrives on adversity
- A competitor always has a positive vision in mind
- A competitor has extremely high standards

#### **7. What is mental toughness?**

- To me mental toughness is the ability to stay true to your foundations in any circumstances
- Mental toughness is huge
- Mental toughness is everything to us
- Mental toughness involves handling adversity
- Mental toughness involves being able to 'stick to it'
- Mental toughness involves developing and maintaining a strong vision for yourself
- Mental toughness involves confidence
- Confidence is borne from preparation
- Confidence is a process
- Mental toughness involves not being afraid to fail
- Mental toughness involves not being afraid to lose

*Coach G-1 Field Notes***1. What do you believe in?**

- Winning is important--don't lose sight of this
- We may not always get the best players; however we can always get a great kid
- It's important to find kids who care more about others than they do themselves
- Staff cohesion will help you to find the right kind of kids
- We try to find kids that we like---There is a like-ability factor here---Our staff tries to find kids that we would like to play ball with
- We try to find a guy who loves to play the game

**2. What do you want your team to look like on game day?**

- Play in a manner that makes us proud
- Play with great effort
- We talk to our guys a lot about not being scoreboard guys--whatever is going on with the score of the game should have nothing to do with how our effort is--it should always be consistently high
- I would like for people to say "That's the hardest playing football team that I have ever seen" after watching us play
- I want our team to play in a sportsmanlike manner
- Playing in a sportsmanlike manner is not being soft
- Helping a guy up after you knock him down is okay
- Stay off the logo--don't call kids out on the other team
- I would like people to say that they have watched a pretty sportsmanlike team after they watched us

**3. What would you like your program to be known for?**

- Respect for their behavior and how they carry themselves
- To be able to say that you were more than just a good team---good sportsmanship

**4. What do you want your players to be able to take away from their experience in your program?**

- It is important to act and behave well elsewhere not just in football.
- Doing good things away from football is important
- When you leave our program you will leave as a better person and a better citizen

**5. What is competition? What role does competition play in the development of your team culture?**

- Competition is about getting up every day and earning your keep
- Every day you must work to keep your job

- Every day you must do the best that you can
- You must earn your job daily--in the strength room--in academics--in the training room and so forth
- Understanding that talent guarantees nothing
- An attitude must be developed toward competition or you will fall behind
- If you don't enjoy competing against others---you won't be very good
- Comparison eventually enters into it--to be the best you must play your best against the best

### **7. What characteristics would you apply to an individual that you perceive to be a competitor?**

- Consistency--guys who have the mindset daily
- When the first game is six months away--they are giving their all
- Guys who will push themselves without an opponent
- Guys who understand that it is a 12 month deal to compete
- It's an every day thing--guys wake up and go to bed thinking about football
- Don't see excellence as a sometime thing or a seasonal thing
- Guys who don't get burned out--competing is an every day deal to them---not something that will wear them down

### **8. What is mental toughness?**

- Too much is made of this mental toughness deal
- Mental toughness is something that you prepare for
- Being prepared to deal with adversity
- Understand bad calls, blown assignments, and bad bounces are going to happen
- How will you react to this adversity?
- Being mentally tough is more about preparation than anything else
- Expect that tough times will come--be prepared to respond positively when the tough times come

### **9. How do you develop mental toughness in your team culture?**

- You want your team to become as mature as they can
- Having older guys doesn't necessarily guarantee maturity
- Maturity is developed through experience
- Understand how you individually and how the team collectively is growing as the process unfolds--demonstrating how you might be better prepared to deal with adversity
- Create experiences where you have to compete against an opponent who is better than you are
- Physical toughness will help you to build the mental toughness
- Mental toughness acquires you similar to the way that poise acquires you as per Coach Wooden

- You can learn something from losing--recognize what went right and what went wrong---how can you use both to help you to improve

**10. What characteristics would you apply to an individual that you perceive to be mentally tough?**

- They always have a positive outlook
- Day in/Day out they are positive!
- They don't bitch and complain when things are not going right
- To these guys---no obstacle is too tough!
- These guys always want to know when is the next challenge?
- When they come off the field on Saturday, they want to know who's next?
- Guys who are mentally tough don't let themselves get down
- These guys are always bowing their neck and blowing snot bubbles
- These guys are always looking to help their teammates to be better



*Coach M-IAA Field Notes***1. What do you believe in?**

- I believe in a biblically based approach to building our program
- Proverbs 16---Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be fulfilled
- Our approach is the total athlete approach
- We believe that our job is part ministry and part mission
- Ministry in the sense that we continue the sanctification process in each man
- Mission in the sense that we reach out to those who have not yet made that decision
- Our program should be a training ground for young coaches to nurture them so they may go out into the world to be examples of this process when they leave here
- Our job is to advance the university and it's sphere of influence through our work and to help it grow as it attempts to move from a regional university to a national university

**2. What do you want your team to look like on Saturday?**

- Excellence; at all times
- **Do the best and then be first**
- Excellence before, during, and after
- Excellence in all that we do
- Excellence in the performance of our conduct and sportsmanship
- Displaying humility in victory and defeat

**3. What would you like for your program to be known for?**

- Good stewards of what has been entrusted to us
- Efficient users of the resources that we have been provided with
- Maximize what the Lord has given us to honor Him, so we may be entrusted with more

**4. What do you want your players to be able to take away from their experience in your program?**

- Life lessons and eternal lessons
- The concept of fatherhood
- How to be good family men
- How to be good husbands
- The idea that you should be a husband first and a father second
- The understanding that there is a devaluing of the males in our society that is enhanced by the perpetuation of this process of creating children out of wedlock

**5. What is competition?**

- Competition is what has made our country great
- Following biblical standards---Iron sharpens iron
- We are the best because of it
- Being the best you can be at something
- To bring out the best in one another on a level playing field

#### **6. What role does competition play in the development of your team culture?**

- We've had to teach our players how to compete
- We've had to build this concept
- The student of the millennium comes to us ill equipped to compete
- They have a very vanilla attitude toward competition
- They have a lack of alienation---they are very comfortable with each other---hence they are more cooperative than they are competitive
- They don't know how to compete
- They have been raised to believe that everyone needs to feel good
- Society has reduced the benefits of competition
- Our youth programs provide a negative connotation for competition from an early age on
- Our youth programs take away the intrinsic value of competition by focusing participation upon the extrinsic rewards that one gets from participation
- If it doesn't come easy, this generation will quit
- Players today don't see the value in being a back-up
- Players today don't see the value in being a special teams player
- We have a competition day for practice
- We set up our scrimmage situations so they are competitive
- We bring everyone together to watch guys on film compete against one another
- A player is embarrassed if they don't do well here
- You are poorly prepared for life and the world if you don't know how to compete
- Sport and the military are the last two institutions that can truly teach competition properly

#### **7. What characteristics would you apply to an individual that you perceive to be a competitor?**

- Self-motivated
- Dependable
- Doesn't need extrinsic rewards
- John Eldridge---battle to fight--adventure--risk to take--lady to win
- Spiritual--Galatians 5:22-23

#### **8. What is mental toughness?**

- Perseverance
- Perseverance for a duration---not an act---it is a process

- Paramount to character development
- The development and maintenance of hope
- Building and sustaining a high level of faith
- The more we are able to persevere, the longer we are able to persevere
- A mixture of desire and heart tied to goals and aspirations
- An ability to personalize your commitment to excellence within the framework of the team and the contest you are participating in---truly controlling what you can control (Steve Largent)

*Coach B-1 Field Notes*

**1. What do you believe in?**

- Honesty, Integrity and having standards of that nature
- Have an impact on your guys through the example of living your faith
- You have a responsibility as a Head Coach to be some kind of standard for you players and assistant coaches
- There must be a genuineness to what you do---kids are smart---they will see through a lack of this genuineness
- What I talk about with them must match what I do---if I talk about treating women with respect---then they should see me treat my wife that way---I try to go out of my way to have them see me with my wife and acting in this fashion
- Standards for discipline and values
- The Head Football Coach must be a strong personality
- The Head Football Coach must be able to demonstrate stability and confidence when things aren't going well---when the media is negative---when the Internet is buzzing--when the students are talking bad---the Head man must be the rock for the program

**2. What do you want your team to look like on Saturday afternoon?**

- Limited penalties
- Tough
- Hard nosed
- Speedy
- Well executing
- Disciplined
- Playing with tremendous effort

**3/4. What do you want your program to be known for? What do you want your players to take away from their experience in your program?**

- Consistency
- My father's standard of having 14 ten win seasons is something to shoot for
- Winning is the name of the game
- Making your players nice, moral, and ethical and all of that is important--but--you've got to win!
- Duke fires a football coach every four years--because they don't win!--They don't fire a football coach every four years because he doesn't graduate his players!!!
- Administrators say that they want you to graduate a large number of players--that's true--and it's a good thing--but if you don't win--they don't care how many players that you graduate!
- I would like us to be known for winning a large number of games every season!!

**4. What is competition?**

- To be first--a desire to be first
- To be the best--a desire to be the best
- My background as a skill position coach--and my playing as a wide receiver--leads me to like 1 on 1 drills
- Drills where there is a winner and a loser
- Drills that show you guys that never like to get beat
- Drills that show you guys that always want to be first in line and come out on top
- Guys that want to push the limit on what they can be
- In drills and in the classroom--will a guy utilize all of the academic resources that we provide for them to get A's instead of C's??

**6. What role does competition play in the development of your team culture?**

- I'm not sure that we have enough of this now
- We go to hideaway here soon--that is one of the things that we are going to discuss--do we have enough competition in all that we do
- Do we have enough competition during practice?
- Are their winners and losers in all that we do?
- Belotti/Carroll model for competition in practice
- We need a measurement standard for our practices to monitor our competitiveness.

**7. What characteristics would you assign to a competitor?**

- Pride--in being first--in winning the battle--first in every line

**8. What is mental toughness? What role does the development of mental toughness play in the development of your team culture?**

- The ability to handle your assignment under adverse conditions
- When you are experiencing pain, fatigue, when you are under duress--will you do your job?
- Mental toughness is the difference in determining who we can count on
- You want those guys that you can count on

**10. What characteristics would you assign to an individual that you perceive to be mentally tough?**

- Never takes himself out of a drill
- One guy that stands up to lead--doesn't just talk about doing it--but leads by performance when things are tough--like---at the goal line--will a guy holler about making a play--or will he make a play?
- Leads by performance

*Coach H-IAA Field Notes***1. What do you believe in?**

- God has a plan for my life
- God has a purpose for my life
- I believe that I am called to coach
- I have a tremendous responsibility as a coach
- Every time that I address the team and the coaching staff, I must assume this responsibility and be a positive influence to all
- I must be a mentor to the assistant coaches
- I must challenge the assistant coaches
- I must support the assistant coaches during difficult times
- I must encourage the coaches to be the best coach they can be
- I must encourage the players to be the best players that they can be
- I must assume the role of the father figure for our players who don't have a father and all who are in transition from high school to college
- I must be there for them when they go through the challenges

**2. What do you want your team to look like on Saturday afternoon?**

- Disciplined
- Very few penalties
- Carrying themselves the right way
- No hands up in the air when something goes wrong
- When you do that you are attempting to deflect blame from yourself and put it on others
- No throwing of the helmets on the sideline when they are challenged by a coach as they come off the field
- No yelling and screaming at teammates when there is a blown assignment
- I want our team to play with emotion and intensity
- I want our team to execute in all phases of the game
- I want our team to be physically and mentally tough

**3. What do you want your program to be known for?**

- A disciplined program
- Guys that do well on and off the field
- A team that does things the right way
- The right way in: recruiting, practice preparation, game day effort
- A team that plays hard
- Players that play at that school have great character
- Players that play there are responsible, giving of themselves, respectful

**4. What do you want your players to be able to take away from their experience in your program?**

- We are a military college--it is our responsibility to develop leaders
- Our players should leave our program with an understanding of how to be a leader
- All great leaders are results oriented
- The score does matter
- Getting good grades does matter
- It is important to set goals and to be goal oriented
- Academic goals are set for all--4.0, 3.5, 3.0, 2.5, and so forth--depending upon where you were the previous semester
- % body fat--bench, clean, squat, spiritual standpoint
- The importance of being passionate about what you do
- The importance of being passionate about all that you do--passionate about getting good grades--being giving of yourself, and so forth

**5. What is competition?**

- Competition is about giving everything you have physically, mentally, and emotionally to win a prize
- In a one on one situation, in a scrimmage, in a game, to win a conference championship and so forth
- Working as hard as you can to win a prize
- The prize doesn't necessarily have to do with 'winning'
- What is your goal? What was your goal going into the game?? That could be your prize

**6. What are the characteristics of a competitor?**

- Mentally tough
- Doesn't quit
- Gives maximum effort, every play, every rep

**7. How does competition help the development of your team culture?**

- This how you create an environment of success
- Goals must be set
- All must give their all--all of the time
- You must compete to get this done

**8-10. What is mental toughness? What are the characteristics of someone who is mentally tough? What part does mental toughness play in the development of your team culture?**

- Overcoming adversity by not allowing an obstacle to prevent you from fulfilling your goals
- Being positive
- The glass is always half full
- Being resilient
- Aggressive by nature--not necessarily physically aggressive--but proactive mentally and emotionally
- You must create an environment which challenges guys to do things that they think they can't do
- Recognition day is big for us
- We recognize our freshman class at the end of their first year--all of their accomplishments are noted--all of the obstacles that they have overcome are noted---all of the small goals one by one that they have accomplished are noted



*Coach B-1AA Field Notes***1. What do you believe in?**

- I believe that you must believe in what you are doing
- You must be committed to your system and your ideas about developing your team culture
- When things are not going well--you must be solid--you must not seek change when things start to go wrong---believe in what you do!
- When you take over a program you must change the thinking
- You must manage the details to change the culture
- The little things--picking up the trash--the grass clippings and so forth
- You must get one person to believe--then you must get two--find key people--leaders and get them to believe in what you are doing

**2. What do you want your team to look like on Saturday afternoon?**

- Play hard
- Play with excitement
- Play with a swagger---confidence
- It's the way you walk on the field---How you take the field
- Playing on the edge---on the fringe---that's the way that champions play

**3. What do you want your program to be known for?**

- Doing things the right way
- Caring for young people
- We want our players to be mentors for the elementary and middle school kids in the community

**4. What do you want your players to take away from participation in your program?**

- A sense of caring
- A Sense of trust
- Getting them to learn to trust themselves and others
- They must be taught how to trust
- What is your 68? What is it inside you that makes you tick?? Tell each other so you can learn to trust each other

**5. What is competition?**

- Competition is life
- Competition occurs every day---it's what we do!
- You gotta teach 'em to be competitive

- You've got to push the limits on how excellent you can be
- Competition is about not backing down in critical situations---when your back is against the wall

#### **6. What are the characteristics of a competitor?**

- Passionate about what he is doing
- Intelligent---there are all types of intelligence---athletic---intellectual---awareness
- Always want to finish

#### **7. How does competition enter into the development of your team culture?**

- We have our 'Breakfast of Champions' where we challenge our guys to be competitive in difficult situations
- Our weight room program is competitive
- In two a days we will hold more competitive drills
- We use a towel---grab a side of it and pull! Tug of war!! Who wins???

#### **8. What is mental toughness?**

- It has to do with competition
- Whether you're up by four TD's or down by three TD's--you play the same---you don't quit
- It goes back to trust--believing in what you are doing
- Mental toughness is about being able to trust each other when things aren't going well

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