

A Football Player Is a Wonderful Creature'

by John Faires

Playing football at USIU has been a great experience, personally. Having experienced other coaching philosophies during my career, I must say these taught here are more advantageous to the athlete.

Recently, the biggest and probably the most emotional experiences have taken place at the first and fifth game of the season. In those, we lost to the University of Hawaii and Whittier by a single point.

One More Chance

When you lose by a single point, it really hurts. More so, I think, than if you lose by twenty. As a player on the losing end, you want to play the game again, knowing if the chance were granted, your opponent wouldn't have a chance at all to win. As we all know, the opportunities aren't given and you must accept it as such.

As I walked from the field after the Whittier loss I couldn't help but evaluate my performance, as I'm sure my teammates did. Through my mind I recreated each play, and somehow felt that if I would have given just a little more on that play, maybe we could have caught that pass or got that crucial first down or even that touchdown.

Could Do Better

The feeling of the loss got even worse when the head coach spoke after the game. In your heart you knew you cheated yourself and him, because the team could have done better.

As a true athlete, you never forget the big wins and the heartbreaking losses. Hawaii and Whittier were no exception. However, some consolation was found as I remembered the

article written by Charles Loftus, Director of Sports Information at Yale University.

Loftus Writes

It read as follows:

"Between the innocence of boyhood and the dignity of man, we find a sturdy creature called a football player. Football players come in assorted weights, heights, jersey colors and numbers, but all football players have the same creed; to play every second of every game to the best of their ability.

"Football players are found everywhere—underneath, on top of running around, jumping over, passing by, or twisting from or driving through the enemy. Teammates rib them, officials penalize them, students cheer them, kid brothers idolize them, coaches criticize them, college girls adore them, alumni tolerate them and mothers worry about them. A football player is Courage in cleats, Hope in a helmet, Pride in pads and the best of Young Manhood in moleskins.

"When your team is behind, a football player is incompetent, careless, indecisive, lazy, uncoordinated, and stupid. Just when your team threatens to turn the tide of the battle he misses a block, fumbles the ball, drops a pass, jumps offside's, falls down, runs the wrong way or completely runs the wrong way.

A Composite of Qualities

"A football player is a composite—he eats like Notre Dame, sleeps like Notre Dame, but, more often than not, plays like Grand Canyon High. To an opponent publicity man, he has the speed of a gazelle, the strength of an ox, the size of an elephant, the cunningness of a fox, the agility of an adagio dancer, the quickness of a cat, and the ability of Red

Grange, Glen Davis, Bronco Nagurski and Jim Thorpe—combined.

“To his own coach he has, for press purposes, the stability of a snail, the fleetness of a mule, is held together by adhesive tape, bailing wire, sponge rubber and has about as much chance of playing on Saturday as would his own grandfather.

“To an alumnus a football player is someone who will never kick as well, run as fast, run as far, block as viciously, tackle as hard, fight as fiercely, give as little ground, score as many points or generate nearly the same amount of spirit as did those particular of his own yesteryear.

Likes and Dislikes

“A football player likes game films, trips away from home, practice sessions without pads, hot showers, long runs, whirlpool baths, recovered fumbles, points after touchdowns and quiet satisfaction which comes from being part of a perfectly **executed** play. He is not much for wind sprints, sitting on the bench, rainy days, after game compliments, ankle raps, scouting reports or calisthenics.

“No one else looks forward to September or so little to December. Nobody gets so much pleasure out of knocking down, hauling out, or just plain bringing down the enemy. Nobody else can cram into one mind assignments for an end run, an off-tackle slant, a jump pass, a quarterback sneak, a drive play, punt protection, kickoff returns, a buck lateral, goal line stands, or a spinner cycle designed to result in a touchdown every time it is tried.

“A football player is a wonderful creature—you can criticize him, but you can't make him quit. You can get him out of a game, but you can't get him out of football, Might as well admit it—be you alumnus, coach, a fan--he is your personal representative on the field, your symbol of fair and hard play. He may not be an All-American, but he is an example of the American way. He is judged not for his race, not

for his religion, not for his social standing, not for his finances, but by the democratic yardstick of how well he blocks, tackles and sacrifices individual glory for the overall success of his team.

Man of Determination

“He is a hard working, untiring, determined kid doing the very best he can for his school or college. And when you come out of a stadium, grouching and feeling upset that your team has lost, he can make you feel very ashamed with two sincerely spoken words—“We tried.”

As before, Mr. Loftus' article made a great impression on me, as I'm sure it did on you. It becomes a great reminder to the athlete who may have doubts as to his purpose in athletics.

Playing football can closely be associated with reaching maturity. You get knocked down, stepped on, ridiculed and disgusted. Those who fight back, those who look to improve and those who give a damn will lead a full life. Those who don't will always be losers.