

# THE 5 GUYS YOU WILL DEFEAT



BY MARK W. MALCOLM THE SHELTON SCHOOL

They are blessed, whose calling is coaching football. Those called to coach football in Texas are doubly blessed. We ply our avocation in a state famous for producing great coaches who in turn, built programs that remain paragons. Even surrounded by so many examples of excellence, there are coaching archetypes that we want to avoid. Learn to recognize these in others and avoid them in yourself, and you will defeat them on the field.

## EYORE

For Eeyore, it is always about to rain. There are coaches you will defeat who make Eeyore look like Mary Tyler Moore. They carry their dark cloud with them. They infect their own programs with negativity. No one has it tougher than they do. The breaks are always against them. Every game becomes an exercise in waiting for the other shoe to drop. The team's first mistake is greeted with a slippery-slope certainty that the roof is about to cave in. They are the poster boys for what Grit author, Angela Duckworth, calls "learned hopelessness."

Coaches are by nature worriers, but the

good ones have learned not to convey their worry to the team. The great ones have learned to prepare well and not worry about the things they can't impact. Once Mark Boone and I were tasked with trading film with Plano before their showdown game with Lewisville. The great Plano Coach Tommy Kimbrough brought us the film, himself, and then lingered to chat. I left in wonder at his calm confidence. Like Frost's description of the ice "rising on it's own melting", he and his team were confident in their preparation.

## THE STOVE TOUCHER

For most of us, touching the hot stove, once, was enough to break us of that habit, but there are coaches whose programs demonstrate the same flaw, year in and year out. Perhaps it is a detail issue. For instance, not spending the time on special teams. Invariably, they lose close games because they haven't developed a kicker, or they can't cover kicks with the game on the line.

Sometimes it is an organizational blindness that causes them to ritually maintain practices out of habit, which bring with it the seeds of defeat. It is, after all, "the

way we have always done it." For instance, there is the story of a staff that had their offensive linemen drive the five-man sled on a daily basis, with their arms wrapped around the sled pads. Every Saturday, the staff commiserated over the unfair number of holding penalties that were called on them. The referees must have it in for us. There is no other explanation for it, they told themselves.

## INSPECTOR GADGET

Some of the coaches you will beat are on an endless quest for the Holy Grail, which will allow them to skip right over the grinding, disciplined pursuit of excellence to the Valhalla of consistent success. If they can just find the right machine, the right motivational trick, the right magic beans, they can be Allen or Katy. Rather than seeing program building as the turning of a flywheel, which picks up speed through the consistency of momentum, they expect to procure it like a bag full of pens, combs, and some Old Harper.

You have seen them. Every year they circle the booths at coaching school like



sharks with blood in the water. This year it is big red ball that will put them over the top. Last year it was playground equipment. The BSN salesman loves them, and you will too.

## THE WEATHERVANE

The Weathervane is a close friend of Inspector Gadget. He too believes there is a shortcut to building a program, but his chosen path is to mimic the peripheral habits of teams that are winning. He sees it as cause and effect. For him, the rooster crowing makes the sun come up. Notre Dame taps the sign and wins. If my team taps a sign, we will win, he reasons. If a winning team carries around a talisman covered with slogans, his team will be doing it too. If a winning team does the haka dance, his team will be doing it.

Yes, there is a fine line in the process of creating a winning culture, which includes creating a set of core beliefs. Two things set the weathervane apart from the program builder. One is consistency. Core values can't easily change from year to year, or they were never at the core. The second is imbuing every pithy quote from the internet, every new warm-up routine with magical qualities. Unfortunately, having a tap board doesn't make you Notre Dame.

## KNUTE

Henry V at Agincourt, Knute Rockne versus Army, any high school football coach versus any town in Texas. One of these things does not belong, as they used to say on Sesame Street. While we probably all have moments when our pregame talk reaches the elevated level of oratory, it is a tactic, which quickly loses its magic. You can't pull out depth of intensity from your players on game day that they have not created during the week. So



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much pregame bravado evaporates with the first contact.

Imagine how effective Henry V's motivation would have been if he had given the Saint Crispin's Day speech three days in a row? His men would have rolled their eyes, thinking, "Not with the band of brothers, again." Rockne, himself, didn't use the Gipper speech until eight years after Gipp's death. The great coaches and teams tend to be fans of Kevin Costner's pitcher Billy Chapel, who tells himself, "Three more, like I have done a million times." After all, there is something to be said for the quiet confidence that comes with the simple assertion that we will do what we do.

Those of you coach this great game have my deepest admiration. In your commitment to building better young people, you are changing the world every day. God bless you.

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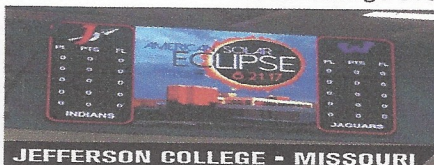
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