

THOSE WHO STAY WILL BE CHAMPIONS

Quitting comes easy for many people. Many do not want to pay the price to be a winner. It requires little effort to be a loser--and anyone who tries can be most successful. The "solid citizens" who finish my "course" will be better men as a result of having stuck it out. The boy who sets his mind to do what is required of him in order to be a winner is not only the type of boy we are looking for, but he will get the most from the program. Those who stay will be champions and will become winners not only on the football field but in life itself.

Walter D. Wintle's poem about a person's state of mind has a great deal of meaning to it. We have the poem posted in various places throughout our building so our boys can read it from time to time. The poem is as follows:

It's All in a State of Mind

If you think you are beaten, you are;
If you think you dare not, you don't;
If you like to win, but don't think you can,
It's almost a cinch you won't.

If you think you'll lose, you're lost;
For out in the world you'll find
Success begins with a fellow's will;
It's all in a state of mind.

For many a game is lost
~~Before~~ even a play is run,
And many a coward fails
~~Before~~ even his work is begun.

Think big and your deeds will grow,
Think small and you'll fall behind:
Think that you can and you will:
It's all in a state of mind.

If you think you are out-classed, you are;
You've got to think high to rise;
You've got to be sure of yourself before
You can ever win a prize.

Life's battles don't always go
To the stronger or faster man,
But sooner or later, the man who wins
Is the fellow who thinks he can.

We must inspire our boys to the degree they think and know they are capable of doing what it takes to win. Teaching the boys how to accomplish this extremely gratifying and one of the regards of coaching.

From time to time I have been asked, "Coach what has been your greatest thrill as a football coach?" Trying to single out the "greatest thrill " or even one of my greatest thrills as a coach, is very difficult for me to do. The game of football has been thoroughly rewarding to me.

I recall one thrill in particular, the day our 1956 team at Texas A & M defeated the University of Texas, 34-21, in Austin. You like to win 'em all, but the real thrill is the story behind this particular game.

It actually started in the spring of 1954 when I first went to Texas A & M. The Aggies had not won the Southwest Conference Championship in 15 years. We hoped to remedy this situation in time, so we commenced our building program that spring.

In the fall we took our players to Junction, a small place in South Texas, for pre-season training.

The work was hard and the weather was hot, and many boys dropped by the wayside. Many did not want to pay the price to be a winner.

That fall I imagine those who had not remained for early season practice felt they had made a wise decision since we won only one football game. Those who stayed, although beaten in every game except one seemed more determined than ever to prove their point. They fought their hearts out in every game and although beaten they won the admiration and respect of everyone for their courage. While it was disappointing to lose, I felt deep down in my heart if those boys stayed, they would be champions by the time they were seniors.

The following year we had a good team, but we lost the final game of the season to the University of Texas, and with it we lost the Conference Championship. So close, yet so far was the elusive championship and a victory over Texas.

From the beginning of the 1956 season the determination of the senior group was evident. Consequently we went into the final game of the season with Texas in Austin, undefeated. There was more to it than just a mere football game. The Aggies had not beaten the University of Texas in Austin for a period of 33 years. In fact they had never beaten Texas in Memorial Stadium, the site of the 1956 battle.

The afternoon of November 29, 1956 could mean a great deal to this group of boys who started setting their sights at Junction in 1954. The public was aware of the fact these boys could win the Southwest Conference Championship, have an undefeated season, and break the "jinx" at Memorial Stadium.

They probably were not aware the stakes were higher. These boys had a chance to prove to themselves that they were men. they could and would do what it takes, no matter how tough it may be, to become champions.

The greatest thrill was not in the final score, 34-21. The thrill was watching those boys work, grow, develop and rise from a season in 1954 where they won only one game to an undefeated season in 1956. Those boys paid the price to become champions. They were champs then, and they will always be champions, because they know, understand, and are willing to do what they must do to be successful. The boys who started at Junction as sophomores are as follows: Don Watson, Lloyd Hale, Jack Pardee, Gene Stallings, Bob Keith. Dennis Goehring, Dee Powell and Bobby Lockett. As for the boys who dropped out because the going was too tough, who can remember their names?

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