

Becoming a loyal and trusted Assistant Coach:

The role of a Coordinator at Minnetonka High School

By Greg Clough, Defensive Coordinator, Minnetonka High School

Coaching Career:

1986, Washburn High School: Defensive line & Offensive line

1987-88, Head Coach Minneapolis Southwest High School

1989-91, Montana State 1989 Graduate Assistant, 1990-91 Defensive Line

1992-96, Head Coach Roseville Area High School

1997-01, Mankato State University 1997-98 Defensive Line, 1999-01 Defensive Coordinator

2002-Present, Minnetonka High School 2002 -Defensive Line,

2003 - present Defensive Coordinator

I have had the honor and privilege to work at Minnetonka High School for the last eleven years, ten as Defensive Coordinator. In this article, I hope to share the things that I think go into being a loyal and trusted Assistant Football Coach. I will highlight three areas that I think are critical in this process. In addition to coordinating the defense I also serve as the liaison to our Youth Football program. The connection we have made with our youth coaches is something I am particularly proud of.

The most important trait an assistant coach must possess is that of loyalty. In this day and age, with the way parental involvement and pressure has ramped up it's critical that your program speak in a singular, united voice. If a parent singles me out to question something about our program I cannot stay silent. These situations require a clear cut decisive rebuttal that brings an end to the discussion. Nothing short of absolute loyalty should ever be accepted. Loyalty is also very important within the ranks of the coaching staff. Everyone has worked with a coach that is never seemingly content no matter how good things seem to be. When dealing with these types of situations, I try to encourage guys to step back and try to appreciate the things we have at Minnetonka High School and how grateful we all should be to be part of the program.

Decisions that are made by the head coach whether they reflect the exact conclusion I would have drawn must nonetheless be embraced and deemed to be in the best interest of the program. To challenge debate and disagree behind the staff meeting room doors is all a part of the function of an effective staff. However, to let these grievances play out in front of the players is symptomatic of a losing program. Fortunately, this is a very, very, rare occurrence at Minnetonka. A good assistant coach recognizes the importance of his role and does not put any aspirations he may have in front of the good of the group. I have found that coaches who constantly eye their next job rarely do the caliber of work required to warrant such

a promotion. We have a motto at Minnetonka High School "coach where you're at". Every coach in our program has value and Coach Nelson does a great job of recognizing the positive contributions of all our staff members.

The next function I want to address is the connection that must be forged between the High School and Youth Football Programs. In 11 years here at Minnetonka our Youth Football numbers have swelled to over six hundred participants. These kids are the future of the program and it is our responsibility to ensure a quality experience for each and every one of them. We meet regularly with our youth coaches in a series of mini clinics during the year. I believe strongly there must be a strong partnership between the high school program and the youth program. Many of these kids are coached by their Dad's so the effort to forge a connection early on pays great dividends down the road.

The last area I want to address is the importance of the coordinator being hungry for technical knowledge. I have been fortunate to have a great deal of autonomy here as the Defensive Coordinator. It is therefore, incumbent on me to be the best technical coach I can be. We have two major coaching clinics in this area, the Glacier Clinic and the Minnesota Coaches Association Clinic. I make sure to regularly attend both of these. Over the years I have noticed the average age of those in attendance rising. Maybe this is because the older we get we realize what we don't know. Clinic attendance should be aimed at filling in these blanks. In addition to these clinics, we regularly bring in college and even pro coaches for one day clinics. We also take regular spring trips as a staff to try and expand our technical expertise. Football is constantly evolving and it takes hard work to stay current with the game.

It has been an honor for me to present this to our association. I hope all of you enjoy your summer and best of luck next fall!

■