

Dawson-Boyd Football Success

By Head Football Coach Cory Larson (10 years)

It was estimated to be 2 miles long, the caravan following the player's bus through the towns of Boyd and then Dawson as the football team returned from the state championship victory last fall. The streets were lined with fans of all ages showing their excitement of Dawson-Boyd's first state championship. It was all very surreal. What your players dreamed of, what they worked so hard for came true. They were State Champions!

Our football program is far from innovative. We beg, borrow and steal. We find things that we feel work best for us, whether it is a drill, a play or part of our strength and conditioning programs. We continue to look for new and different ways to make our program successful. Here are some points of focus for our program.

1. Develop character

We certainly all want to develop our kids into great football players. I don't doubt that we understand that developing character is important. Coaches, myself included, can get caught up in winning games rather creating a better individual through the game of football. Years after our players graduate they reminisce about their football experiences with their teammates but what will make them successful in life is the character they built being part of your football program. As a coach, you won't truly know if you were successful until years after your players leave your program

2. Academics come first.

We want our players to put the same effort into academics as they do athletics. Again, its part of the character building process. It's easy for teenage boys to miss the importance of their high school educations. At some point most of them aspire to be professional athletes only to come to find out the odds are stacked against them. Our hope is they will build a vision for themselves in a career they can be passionate about.

3. Off-season.

We jokingly say, "There is no off-season." We want our kids to be active year round. We want them to play multiple sports, not just to stay active but our small school needs them to participate.

The main goal with off-season strength and conditioning is to make our kids better athletes. We do very little that is sport specific since most kids are involved in multiple sports. Again, we steal things from various strength programs that will make our kids stronger, faster and quicker. We have three organized team workouts during the week in the summer. Two of those focus on lower body and core with the third being a speed, agility and quickness workout. The other days the kids are on their own.

The weight room certainly helps our athletes strength wise, but also mentally. It is much harder to give up when you have invested so much time and effort. Lastly, and most importantly, the weight room provides a place for us to build team unity. It is much easier to push yourself when you know your teammates are doing the same.

4. In-season.

As much we want to build team morale in the off-season, we really don't know what our team chemistry will be like until August practices begin. It is a season long process that we feel is vital to executing the X's and O's part of the game. Each player has set individual goals for themselves but ultimately it has to be the team goals that we focus on.

Even though our coaching staff may not change from year to year, our players do and along with it so does the personality of the team. We don't try to change that and force them into not being themselves. What we emphasize is that you understand when to joke around and when to get to work. We want our kids to show their personalities but also be ready to compete.

Every team enjoys winning but the great teams enjoy the preparation just as much, if not more. Some say winning can build winning but what really happens is that as players go through a program is they learn how to prepare. Preparation leads to victories.

5. Make an impact.

We certainly want to build a winning tradition and for our kids to have a reputation as being respectful, hardworking athletes. This is possible because our seniors graduate having shown the underclass men how to lead in a first class manner and they have left next year's team with the same expectations their team had. If this tradition lives on then the winning and character building continues.

6. Be gracious in defeat. Be humble in victory.

When you have invested so much it will certainly hurt when you lose but you still need to show respect to your opponents. Every win should bring excitement and build confidence but do not let it grow into arrogance. If we have built the character we want in our kids this gets taken care of but we still remind our kids on every bus ride back to the locker rooms, be gracious if we lost and humble if we won.

The pride our community has shown towards the state championship team has been remarkable. The 2011 season is one our players, coaches and community will never forget . I hope the lessons we all learned along the journey last just as long. ■