

Parents:

I'm sorry for the length of this email but hope you take the time to carefully read it.

Well, my only hope is that last night was an anomaly and nothing more. It was a total and complete lack of any effort whatsoever by 19 boys. I have never seen anything like it on any team I have coached or played for. Not one kid was fired up to play or even acted like they wanted to be there. We have complete lack of leadership on this team and we, as coaches, cannot be required to fire them up. They have to want to play hard. For the *team*. Right now, they are playing as individuals as opposed to as a team. If they show up like that Saturday, or any other game day, it is going to be an awfully long season. And there is simply too much talent on this team to allow that to happen. We have had two games and four controlled scrimmages and in only one of them did we show up ready to play. Particularly on the line. It is as if, once they get hit, they lose interest in hitting back.

On the bright side, practices have been great, including Monday night, so I really can't account for the way they showed up, warmed up, practiced and played last night. I simply hope that they get their heads straight again tonight and we finish the week strong. That being said, on offense, I am throwing my projected starters out the window and starting over the next two nights. I want to see who wants to play. I would rather lose with energetic kids than win with more talented ones who take this opportunity for granted. I want to see how each kid reacts to the next two practices. But again, if a player doesn't know the plays, it is just as bad as not giving full effort on the field.

I know for a fact that my son knows the assignments of all 11 players on every single one of the 17 plays. And he has never practiced line even one night. I tell you this no to brag about him, as he looked as lost and uninspired as any of them last night, and certainly needs to get better as much or more than anyone else, but instead to show you that learning these plays isn't hard, it just takes effort and desire. I expect him to know that playbook like the back of his hand. I would be willing to bet that less than half the team has even looked at the playbook. Ever. Much less studied it each and every night so as to ensure he knows it inside out. I have told the boys over and over not to just learn one position, learn them all on the line or backfield so that they are prepared at a moment's notice. I realize they may not have actually practiced a certain position, but they should still know the assignments.

Our offensive line is simply not aggressive nor physical in the least. I have made it as simple as I can and have them all double teaming and they are still routinely beaten off the ball. I am so tired of defensive lineman in my backfield. Most of them know their assignments, but just don't execute. Every defensive line we play simply overpowers them. I have used drill after drill to try and teach them the skill necessary to effectively block but it does me no good when they don't even seem to care nor pay attention in practice. No one leads them and they seem soft, lost, and completely uninspired to block at any level. I blocked all my life and took so much pride in making our offense roll. I try to relay that to them but it clearly isn't getting through to them. And I have grown tired of hearing tackles and ends say "I only know how to play left, or right" when the blocking assignments are exactly the same!

I believe our backs have as much or more talent than any team we will play. And I understand that they are stymied by the fact that the line simply won't block. But we also have glaring problems there, too. Far too many of them have only learned the plays at one position. I understand there is a difference in knowing them and running them, but even without reps at that spot they should all at least know where to be and what to do, even if they haven't practiced it. But routinely they come in the huddle and tell me they only know one position and still don't know what to do on that play. How is that possible? My goal is to make all the backs interchangeable so they can all get time at each position and equal opportunities but how can I do that if they won't even take the time to learn all of the positions? But I will tell you this, if another kid cries because he got tackled or blocked he will sit the rest of the quarter or the half. I'm done. I had a kiddo on the sideline bleeding from the face without a tear to be seen but I have three in my huddle crying because they have "hurt feelings".

I have worked myself like a dog for the past month for this team and I am frankly spent and frustrated beyond belief. I slept maybe two hours last night thinking about how to motivate them to want to succeed. Particularly as it pertains to the line. I have watched more film in the past two weeks than I did playing college ball trying to dissect our problems and resolve them. But the bottom line is that I know what we are doing is right and will work if we can just get the kids to motivate themselves.

Accordingly, I will be selecting four team captains and announcing them at practice tomorrow night. They will serve for the entire season. These selections will be made based on practice attendance, timelines, effort, discipline, attention to detail, knowledge of the playbook, hustle and overall leadership qualities. These four will be counted on to lead the team, assist with discipline, motivate, and better those around them. I had thought leaders would simply emerge but they haven't so I will select them myself and provide them the guidance to succeed. I am doing this of my own volition, at my discretion, so if you, as a parent, have issues with it, see me personally. My assistants have done a marvelous job with the boys but the buck stops with me and I have to be the one to fail or succeed based on what I believe to be best for the team as a whole. I have tried to please and placate kids, coaches, parents, etc. but enough is enough. From this day forward I will coach my way and my way only.

In addition, **we will have a "chalk talk" tomorrow night at 7:30pm at the field where the parents typically sit.** The boys will be quizzed on the playbook and I will individually critique each play and each player based on practice and my film review of all of our games and scrimmages thus far. All parents are welcome to listen in and I will do this in your presence. You will have an opportunity to hear how your son does in his playbook knowledge and also my thoughts on his play thus far, both the good and the bad. Ultimately, we will all be on the same page by the end of the discussion in terms of what is expected of the team as a whole. Should any of the boys refuse to pay attention or otherwise disrupt the session they can go run. I expect them all to be enthusiastic about getting better.

I expect to see all of you the next two nights.

Dave