



## Champion Coach Note: Why We Practice Perfectly

Legendary football coach, Vince Lombardi, said, "Practice does not make perfect. Perfect practice makes perfect." Lombardi held his players to a high standard of excellence, as did former Notre Dame football coach, Lou Holtz, who told his players, "I want you to be the best, the very best, in all areas of your life. I want you to be the best student you can be. I want you to be the best person you can be. I want you to be the best football player you can be. To play at Notre Dame is to seek perfection. I want to tell you something: either we are going to reach perfection, or we're going to come so close that the average person won't know the difference. To strive for perfection means you've got to be totally dedicated. I can't be an occasional thing – it's got to be a total dedication in everything you do." (*Wins, Losses, and Lessons*, 250). A commitment to excellence is an attitude that individuals choose to permeate their entire life. That commitment shouldn't change upon leaving the field – it should be the same at home, in the classroom, in relationships, and in one's faith life.

As a coach, your personal dedication to excellence in all areas of your life will serve to better position your athletes and team for success. In fact, a commitment to excellence should drive an entire athletic program from the top-down. As a coach, it is your responsibility to demonstrate that commitment in your preparation and conduct and in your attitude during practice and games. Your modeling sets

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"The perfection of Christian character depends wholly upon the grace and strength found alone in God."

~ Ellen G. White

### Athlete Reflection

Watch the [clip](#) with Coach Gaines from Friday Night Lights and reflect on the following questions

1. Can I look my teammates in the eye after every practice and game, knowing that I did everything I could?
2. Do I do my best to live in the moment?
3. Do I focus on the positives and find moments of joy inspired by my teammates and coaches?
4. Am I committed to excellence in all areas of my life? What are some things that I can work on?

the tone for all those around you.

However, it is important not to let a desire for perfection taint a commitment to excellence. There is a real danger in expecting perfection, or a performance level that is simply unattainable. Lombardi also said, "Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence." To strive for perfection with the understanding that there will be failure is a healthy mentality that leads to excellence. After all, if perfection is attained, there is no room for improvement – and every athlete and individual can improve in some area of his or her life! It is the striving to get better, a commitment to giving one's personal best that truly shapes an athlete's character.

As a coach, also stress that being wholly perfect is not directly linked to performance. Coach Gaines, in the TV series, *Friday Night Lights*, reminds his players what it truly means to be perfect: "Being perfect is not about that scoreboard out there. It's not about winning. It's about you and your relationship with yourself, your family and your friends. Being perfect is about being able to look your friends in the eye and know that you didn't let them down because you told them the truth. And that truth is you did everything you could. There wasn't one more thing you could've done. Can you live in that moment as best you can, with clear eyes, and love in your heart, with joy in your heart? If you can do that gentleman - you're perfect!"

Seek excellence together with your athletes. Stress to your athletes that attitude and performance in practice directly impacts performance on the field. Help your athletes identify that excellence begins in practice, and that perfection should be sought after each and every day, and in all areas of our life.