

FORUM

Eddie Robinson, 'a Good American Football Coach'

"If you can't win, make the fellow ahead of you break the record."
—Anonymous



Motivational Moments

Nigel Alston

Eddie Robinson: College Football's Winningest Coach, 408-165-15. This was the headline on the front page of *The Times-Picayune* this past Sunday. Eddie Robinson had ended a 55-year career in the Bayou Classic against Southern University.

Southern won the game, but Coach "Rob" won the hearts of all in attendance. He was the center of attention all week, rightfully so, as he has influenced and touched so many lives.

He started his career Nov. 15, 1941, at what was then known as Louisiana Negro Normal Agriculture and Industrial Institute. During his tenure as the Dean of college football coaches, he won 408 games, 17 Southwestern Athletic Conference titles, eight black college football championships and sent 210 players to the NFL — more than anyone else.

Impressive numbers, but coaching is more than wins, losses and pep talks. It is about life, hard work, developing confidence, decision-making and much more. It's about the intangible things you can't register in wins and losses that develop character. That's what Eddie Robinson did and what so many other coaches do every week.

I had a conversation with my little league baseball coach last

weekend. I was 12 years old when he coached the Reds. I remember a game played at Fairview Elementary School on a hot Saturday afternoon. It was the bottom of the last inning and we were at bat and losing. Coach Mitchell told each player what was going to happen, including my home run.

I don't know if he really believed what he said, but we must have. We did exactly what he said and won that game. I can recall that emotional victory, the never-give-up attitude as we jumped up and down and celebrated at home plate.

As we sat in the airport and talked about the influence of coaches on their players, Coach Mitchell mentioned that he wanted to instill confidence in his players. That game was a confidence builder, and he has been at it for 34 years.

Coaches not only have an impact on their players, they touch others through the lessons their players have learned. Former NFL tight end Keith Jackson, an

announcer with TNT, had this to say about Eddie Robinson. "I had the opportunity to play with a number of his former players, and they all spoke highly of him, so I wanted to meet him. I wanted to meet and talk with a man of (Robinson's) stature."

You develop character playing sports and learn how to overcome obstacles and stay focused on your objective. It has been said that obstacles reveal what you believe and who you are.

The hard work and long hours of practice help prepare you for the challenges of life. The days of running up and down that hill behind Kennedy Junior High School on all fours, the fourth quarter drills after practice at Reynolds High School and the intense August practices at Livingstone College helped shape who I am.

Coaches Cuthrell, Hollingsworth, Crater, Bryson, Marshall, Holeman and many others stressed hard work, teamwork, perseverance, and communicated a message that is still

appropriate today: Never quit!

You have to be motivated to achieve, and good coaches know how to create the environment and the conditions to move you beyond what you think is possible.

Coaching is really about preparing others to succeed. It's understanding what you are up against, the will to prepare and overcoming adversity. It's about how to live and be successful.

That's why Eddie Robinson will be missed. He taught a lot of people how to live and be a success in life. He received a standing ovation at the conclusion of the game on Saturday. "You can't replace him", says Doug Williams, former Grambling quarterback and Super Bowl MVP, "you have to bronze him and put him on a pedestal."

Coach Robinson represents the coaches, men and women, everywhere who are developing character in young men and women, boys and girls, the influence of which is yet to be known. Thanks to all coaches for what you sacrifice and the difference you make.

Coach Robinson practiced what he preached; honesty, compassion, and hard work. "I just want to be remembered as a good American football coach," he said. I think he exceeded his expectations. Last week was the kind that could make a grown man cry, and it did.

Nigel Alston is an executive for Integon Insurance Company.

wschron@netunlimited.net

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Only Real Reform Will Curtail Police Brutality

Our officials are all talk and no action when it comes to ending police brutality.

According to the Department of Justice, 47,000 cases of police brutality were reported in the United States between 1986 and 1994. Of those, 293 were prosecuted. In my home state of New Jersey, a police officer has never been incarcerated for killing a civilian, according to the New Jersey Coalition Against Police Brutality.

But the August brutalizing of Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant, in New York City may finally bring action.

The Congressional Black Caucus is demanding change, as is the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights. Both groups came to Washington, D.C., in mid-September to call attention to the problem.

Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., announced at the Congressional Black Caucus' 27th annual conference that select members of the House Judiciary Committee will hold hearings on police brutality. Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee, D-Texas, and Rep. Bobby Scott, D-Va., are on that committee and were on hand. "We are here to listen, but we are also here to act," Jackson-

Guest Column

Daryle Lamont Jenkins

Lee told an enthusiastic crowd. Individuals, mostly from New York and New Jersey, went before C-SPAN cameras, often with tears, to tell how police have harassed, threatened or assaulted them, and to tell of loved ones they have lost to policemen.

For too long, elected officials and police organizations have been turning a blind eye to these accounts.

Why, for example, does New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani feel compelled to voice his outrage and scream for the death penalty when a police officer is killed, yet remain silent when the roles are reversed? Giuliani attacked Bronx District Attorney Robert Johnson, a capital punishment opponent, for not seeking the death penalty after an officer chasing a suspect fell on a broken mirror and bled to death.

However, when a navy veteran was killed by a police officer, Giuliani distanced himself from the incident and barely commented on it.

Then there was the case in Elizabeth, N.J., last October in which a police officer brutally assaulted a 17-year-old by who accidentally ran into his cruiser. The local Fraternal Order of Police attempted to wage a campaign to oust the judge who rightly convicted that officer.

We seem to be on the right track, but as we learned from the Rodney King case, it is not that simple. For true reform, we must revamp the entire criminal justice system. We must reign in vague laws that allow police officers to harass citizens and walk away scot-free. Many at the Congressional Black Caucus conference supported the idea of a community police-review board

with subpoena powers to monitor the police, something that is set up in New York, but was ignored by Giuliani until the Abner Louima case forced him to respond.

We should also call to task the folks in Washington. Ron Daniels, who heads the Center of Constitutional Rights, organized a demonstration outside the Justice Department building on the same day as the Congressional Black Caucus conference and met with Attorney General Janet Reno. According to Daniels, the attorney general's office is supposed to issue a report on police brutality each year. "We're not aware that such a report has been issued, and if it has been issued, we don't hear about it," he said.

The Congressional Black Caucus conference focused on a number of issues, from affirmative action to the plight of black farmers — all very important subjects. Every other effort we make, however, comes to naught if the issue of police brutality continues to go unchecked.

Daryle Lamont Jenkins is a writer and activist living in Somerset, N.J.

SCHEXNIDER

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group are thousands of poor children. Further, according to some estimates, nearly 60 percent of all African-American and Hispanic children come from female-headed households.

A cursory review of American history reveals a tendency toward Ku Klux Klan-type ascendancy during periods of perceived economic distress. We are living in such a time, and many individuals are feeling threats to their economic security. African Americans and Jews are, and have been for centuries, an unfair tar-

get. One would think, though, that as we enter what some refer to as the new millennium, that the Ku Klux Klan would have disappeared along with dinosaurs and dodo birds.

The simple truth is that we are entering not just a new century, but a new world economic order and that some dislocations are a fact of life. We must find a way to address the plight of the disfranchised. Failure to do so will weaken our resolve, dampen our moral fiber, and reduce our capacity for competitiveness in the global

economy.

We are not referring to some distant land here. Winston-Salem is like many American cities moving from an industrial based economy to an economy based on knowledge. Work for many here may be disappearing too, as Wilson reports from Chicago. The local Chamber of Commerce recognizes this and is working with institutions of higher education and venture capitalists to adapt to changing conditions. Winston-Salem's colleges and universities, public and private, have major

roles to play in this restructuring.

As a relative newcomer, I hope that we have seen the last of the EWK, but I am not naive. It is time that we reverse course on this seeming drift toward a return to colored and white signs, invisible though they may be.

The views expressed in this editorial are the views of Alvin J. Schexnider, chancellor and professor of political science at Winston-Salem State University, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the institution.

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CONTACT US:

phone number: 910 / 722-8624
fax: 910 / 723-9173
website address: www.netunlimited.net/~wschron
email address: wschron@netunlimited.net

Copy Editor 722-8624 T.J. WILLS
Sports Editor 723-8428 SAM DAVIS
Circulation 722-8624 DON NAVLOR
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