

The "Acorn never falls far from the Big Oak Tree"

By JOHN ALLEN
Special to THE CHRONICLE

This old saying has always been one of the corny ones that the old people in my neighborhood in Chicago used to say to express actions of the child in relations to the training they receive from their parents.

Another one used to be the, "Lightning doesn't ever strike twice in the same place". Well corny or not those old sayings were dispelled at the recent FRANK SPENCER TOURNAMENT, Dec. 28-30, at the LJVM Coliseum.

It occurred when a young man from Reynolds High School walked away with the MVP trophy - his name Travis Holcomb-Faye. This young man's efforts, combined with the excellent team-first attitude of the Reynolds High School team, ended an unbeaten string for the Parkland squad, which was riding the crest of popularity with the Winston-Salem locals.

Just when everyone had written off the Reynolds squad, along comes a young man with a goal - that is, to win a championship that his father won twenty years earlier. Yet, not only did he and his teammates win the trophy, history was made when he and his father became the first 'father and son' MVP's of this tournament.

As quoted in several news articles, "he wanted to win just to surprise all the Parkland fans" and return the role of top dog in the Forsyth County to the Reynolds Demons. Yet, when he won the award the reaction on his face was not one of overall joy, but the reflection that of a workman being acknowledge for doing something that he loves.

Although, some might view his walk to accept the trophy had an air of arrogance, it really appeared to be a walk of humility because there was no histrionics and he knew that without the swarming team

defense of his teammates and the outside shooting of Brad Tuttle, his number one goal would not have been accomplished.

Which brings us to the tree that this "acorn" fell from and learned several hard lessons.

The big oak tree is really a big fella named Walter Faye. Faye won the Frank Spencer MVP award in 1978, when his North Forsyth team won the Frank Spencer Tournament. Walter has been active in youth sports in Winston-Salem for nearly a decade, including winning a prestigious AAU National championship in 1996.

Last year, he coached the girls' team at Bishop McGuinness High School and is serving as the newly-appointed boys' coach at the school this season.

He probably never told Travis to go out and win the title to be like him, or try to win the MVP so that the two could make history. His advice was simple. There are people out there who don't believe you can lead and are doubting the ability of your team.

His task was to rally his teammates together and lead by example. By doing so he would show his toughness and determination. Push, prod, tease, cajole - do whatever it takes to make your team a champion. But above all else, remember that you cannot achieve your goal without the others around you believing as you believe.

Well in the end "lightning did strike twice", "the acorn didn't fall far from the tree" and history was made at the LJVM. But truly more important than that was the lesson learned from father to son. Setting goals and realizing that you need the help of others to make your goals a reality created a real life father to son lesson in life culminating in the awarding of a trophy.

What a story line? Maybe we can make a movie out of it. Naw, why don't we just congratulate the acorn and the big oak tree.

Neal

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"That's a good situation for me," he said. "By the time I come up I might be able to jump right in."

Over his four year career at Dudley he amassed 248 tackles, 26 sacks and 9 fumble recoveries with one returned for a touchdown.

It was in his last year as a Panther that Neal had his biggest season. He led the team in tackles with 103, sacks (8) and tied for fumble recoveries (4), despite being doubled teamed constantly.

Because of his accomplishments on the gridiron Neal, rated as one of the top seniors in the state by Super Prep Magazine and was chosen to represent the Tar Heel state in the Shrine Bowl last month, where he served as a

team captain.

That is an accomplishment Ferguson says was very much warranted.

"He's a hard worker," Ferguson said. "He puts the time in. Everything he's got he deserves."

Ferguson has watched Neal grow on the field and in the classroom and believes ECU did a good job to snatch him up.

"He's a good kid," Ferguson said. "He's easy to work with. He's a 'Yes sir-no sir' kid. Everybody likes Virgil."

With school starting back this week, Neal said he plans to lock himself in the weight room for the rest of the school year and get ready to leave for Greenville in the summer.

"I feel that all the sweat and tears I shed on the football field and in the classroom has finally paid off," he said.



Photo by Bruce Chapman

Holcomb-Faye (far left) and his teammates took home the spoils after winning the Frank Spencer Classic.

Holcomb-Faye

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teammates. "All along we said that we were a more balanced team," he said. "We knew they only had two really good players and we felt like we had a team full of good

players." Holcomb-Faye's 19-point effort in the championship game gave him 60 for the three tournament games. He also came through with a host of strong defensive plays and distributed the ball well on his way to being

named MVP. "I thought he played better than he has at any time this season," West said. "He gave us everything he had. There were times when he carried us." By doing so, Holcomb-Faye joined an elite group of MVP

winners that includes former ACC players Brian Howard, Ranzino Smith, Kevin Thompson and Donnie Seale. He also joins ranks with his father, Walter Faye, who led North Forsyth to the tournament championship in 1978.

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