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The three coaches I have chosen to study are Mike Ditka, Mike Krzyzewski, and the great Vince Lombardi. The coaches above are the epitome of a leader, as they truly understood how to manage each and every athlete personally, change the game, and most importantly in Lombardi’s eyes, win. The influence left on the players that had the opportunity to play under these coaches led them to great success. Their influences inspire me to better myself as a leader and future coach.

Mike Ditka, also known as “Da Coach,” was and still is known as a mogul in the city of Chicago. He led the Bears to a SuperBowl win in 1985 and left a legacy like none other. From the SuperBowl shuffle, to lining up a defensive lineman at running back to score on the goal line, he changed the game in many ways and created a team culture characterized as “smash-mouth football.” A former player, John Harbaugh said, "The thing I took with me is the passion he had for the game, the way he was able to break the game down to what was important” (Pompei, 2011, Paragraph 27). When reflecting on his experience he also said, "The main thing with him was the raw competition — football always came down to competing man against man, in its rawest form. He had a great way of bringing that out. Be a man. Man up. Do your job” (Pompei, 2011, Paragraph 27). I feel that these aspects are very important in my coaching philosophy, especially in the game of football. Passion is everything in sport, because there is nothing truly glorious about ramming into another human for 60 straight minutes. It becomes a battle with the man in front of you, a pride thing. Breaking down the game into these small competitions is vital because it encourages your players to do their job, and beat the man in front of them. Many times players try to do too much and it hurts the team more than it helps. I aim to stress the idea that if all 11 men on the field do their job, then we will find success on any given day. The “Be a man” idea expressed by Ditka is a tactic that I was exposed to at a young age, and will be a part of my philosophy. Rivera described the idea perfectly as he said, "A lot of things he used to say to us, I say now. I talk about doing things the right way, being accountable, taking ownership, challenging yourself — just like he did”(Pompei, 2011, Paragraph 8). At the end of the day it’s the players’ team, as a coach I can do everything in the world to prepare them but if they don’t want it, they don’t want it.

The next coach I looked at is Mr. 1000, Coach Mike Krzyzewski of the Duke Blue Devils. Over the last four decades Coach K has built up a resume second to none as he has led his teams to five NCAA championships, and his 1,018 total wins to date. He has built a dynasty at Duke University, and has done so because of his ability to get the most out of his athletes. Former Duke forward Gerald Henderson reflected on a past experience, "He asked me, 'How do you think you're playing?'" Henderson recalled recently. "I said, 'I'm doing all right. I feel like I should be doing this and that.' He said—and the best way I can say it is, he says, 'I think you're playing terrible” (Bernstein, 2015, Paragraph 24). Later Coach K said to him, “You're an athlete. You don't do anything athletic. The athletes I had, they dunk on people, they make athletic plays, they drive to the basket. …What are your ambitions, some of your goals when you leave here” (Bernstein, 2015, Paragraph 26)? Although coming from an athletes perspective this doesn’t feel very good at all, it lights a fire inside of you that tends to push you to new heights. This isn’t for any level, its not truly appropriate but at the collegiate or pro level it can be used. Henderson admitted that he thought at that point he was an NBA player but was just average at Duke, and from then on he played lights out and ended up a draft pick. I would use the same tactic to get the best out of my player because I know that he wants to play his best, and I need him at his best. Also I feel that the need for honesty in all aspects of my team need to be present, it promotes a better playing environment. What I took most from Coach K was his lack of Complacency, after decades of coaching, 1,018 wins, five NCAA championships, and many other accolades, he wont step away from the game. After winning his thousandth game a former player said he might have a glass of wine or two, "But he won't dwell on it for very long. He'll watch that game maybe once, twice—that's what he does every night after a game—and then he'll move on to the next game and get ready for whoever they play next” (Bernstein, 2015, Paragraph 65). And that is a value I want to instill in my players, you can bask in the moment of glory but not get stuck because there is so much more to accomplish. If you want to be great you have to keep climbing because you never reach the top in terms of success, and improvement. With this I can show a great sense of poise, yet never ending desire to win.

The third and probably the single most influential coach to ever coach the game of football is Vince Lombardi, who made his mark with the Green Bay Packers. He took a team that wasn’t performing very well and won the first two Super Bowls with the Packers and had the trophy named after him. Jerry Kramer, a former great player of Lombardi’s said, “He understood that he coached 40 separate players, not a team of men. He coached 40 individuals. He knew precisely how much exposure to criticism they could take or could not take” (Stoneberg, 2013, Paragraph 4). This is something I feel that I must remember as a coach because it is easy to forget to deal with many players on a personal level and really work with each individual, rather than the position group or team as a whole. Understanding my athletes separately will help me to know their strengths and weaknesses, so I can create a team. Building relationships will help my players to buy in, and give them the desire to want to work hard for me. This Lombardi quote stuck with Mike Ditka, “The quality of any man’s life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence” (Stoneberg, 2013, Paragraph 5). The Legacy he left was that of a man that put every ounce of what he had into what he loved unselfishly. If I can harness the passion that Lombardi had and display to my athletes, what it can do if they go into every day of practice with that mentality, they can truly be great. But not even just a commitment of excellence on the field. In the classroom, eating right, weights, film study, respect to all those around them. It’s all so important, and it starts with good values from the coach.

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