

# Developing Consistency and Efficiency

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I would like to express my feelings the same as Duffy did concerning the opportunity to be with you each year at these clinics. Duffy has touched on this, but I think it is very important that you be yourself in coaching. I would like to expand on that thought if I might with this thought in mind: What we would all like in coaching would be for our teams to be consistent. When I have tried to gauge people as far as their effectiveness as a coach is concerned, I have always used one barometer. It is not the games that they have won that they should not have won. That doesn't mean a thing to me. Either that or my evaluations are wrong. To me, it is more important to gauge the games that the coach has lost that they should have won. If that happens very often, you are doing a poor job as a coach. The big question is: How do you get that consistency that you strive for as a coach? There is no formula for it that is foolproof. I would like to tell you my total convictions about this theory of consistency.

It starts with the point that I just made--you must be yourself as a coach. Now I can't coach a team like Duffy does because our personalities are quite different. We probably both know the same amount about football; however, your relationship with your players has got to be totally on the level. If you are trying to coach a football team like the coach that you once played for or if you are trying to coach the team like a coach that you read about instead of coaching the team the way that YOU would coach the team, you are in deep trouble. Because over the season there are too many circumstances that are totally high tension where the real you is going to come through. What I am saying is, you can't be play acting. You have got to

be YOU 1000%. If you are you 1000%, your players will understand you. You won't be one character one day and another character the next or feel bad one day and feel good the next; whatever it may be. You are just you. Then as a coach you try to get your players to do the same thing with you. You get them to be themselves and no one else. This is the way you get it started.

I'll tell you how we use to start every season. We started it at spring practice. We would have a squad meeting together and before we discussed offense or defense, or practice time, or anything else I would ask them to think for a minute and answer this one question that I would ask them: How good do you want to be? Because this is not my decision. It is not our coaching staff's decision. It is your decision. Now we can help you achieve, hopefully, quite close to what your maximum physical potential and emotional potentials are. But we will never make that fundamental decision as how much does it really mean to you. Men, I would like to have an honest answer from you right now. If you want to be mediocre, we will be mediocre. If you don't care, then that is the way we'll be. If you want to be pretty good, then we will be pretty good. If you want to be as good as we could be and reach our maximum, if you are willing to pay the price for that, we can probably do that. Now having established that base, I think you have to keep eluding to it and keep repeating it. The only way that I know how to do that is to be consistent about that every few days. I don't think that anyone here would disagree with the thought: That if everybody will do their very best on every single play, that's what you are looking for. That gives you consistency. But we

also know that football is a damn tough physical game. The first play we assume everyone is going to make a pretty honest effort. The same for most of the people on the second play, but on the third play you got three guys who either got hit hard or ran a little to far and they're breathing hard and they're going to take a little blow this time and then on the next play they're going to be geared up to go. So after the second or third play, there are eleven men out there, you got about seven of them going full speed while three or four of them are resting and then of the seven that went full speed three of them start resting. You never get eleven people really hitting it the way they must if you are again going to get your maximum potential. What you are really aiming for is that everybody do everything every play as well as they can. And if they will now be honest with you again. You explain this to them and you say, "Now, when we go out to practice today, I would like for all of you to give me a commitment that you are going to do everything, every drill, every move as well as you know how to do it." And you know, they will nod. So you come in after practice and again you have got to establish a base of honesty, and I don't know that I have been able to make that point clearly enough in practice, and you come together in the locker room and you say, "How many of you honestly did as well as you could every single time? Raise your hand." There won't be any because nobody is physically capable of doing that. "How many of you did it 90% of the time?" And on the first go-round with this little deal you won't get any hands there either. "How many of you did it 80% of the time? Four-out-of-the-five times you really went as best you could?" You will get a few hands. "Okay men, let's try to do better the next time." Do you all understand what we are talking about? This is a game where you have got to give your maximum every time the ball moves. So you practice another four or five days and this time I think it is better if you kinda make it a surprise. You come in the locker room after practice--"How many of you did it the best you could

every time?" No hands again. "Ninety percent of the time?" You might get one. But if you keep doing this and you get them to understand the basic of the game which is: I've got to do my best all of the time.

And to summarize it, you can make the point this way very clearly and I think they will understand you and this is where the consistency of performance really comes through. This is not a game where you play another opponent. This is a game where you play yourself. The great thing about football is that it gives you an opportunity to find out what kind of a man you are. There will be certain days that you are going to play against somebody that is so bad you can beat him without putting forth very much effort at all. And there is going to be some other days that guy opposite you is going to be better than you are and you may never beat him. But that is irrelevant because the contest is not between you and that guy. The contest is between you and yourself. Tell me, "Did you honestly do as well as you could every single time? every play?" Now I believe you can sell this concept. I really do. And I believe if you can, your team will play consistently. Because a player who can understand what I have tried to say here very briefly really recognizes that the man opposite him in a green shirt one day and a gold shirt another day and a red shirt the third week, all he is is a "Mr. X." That his only purpose is to help me to find out about me. Am I capable of being as good as I could be? That's all. And if I am, then I have understood what this game is all about and I have also understood myself a little bit. If you will play yourself, everyday is what I am saying, instead of trying to play an opponent you get rid of those peaks and valleys of performance. This is a team that has lost four games so why do we have to be ready. That never enters the conversation when you are getting ready to play. "Last week how many of you played 90% of the time the best you could play?" Today let's see if we can't make it 95%. You can begin to communicate with them. Now this is something you cannot do one

time around. This is something you have got to be talking to them about on a consist bases over a period of time until they finally do understand you. But if they do understand you and if you have established that level of honest communication then I think you can, hopefully, have a team that will play to their maximum potential and that's what it is all about. There are going to be days, and I would like to say that if they do that you are going to win them all and you're not, because there are going to be times when you're playing against people who have better players than your people are and you can't by attitude wash that out. But most of the time the competition is relative close and as Duffy pointed out earlier, most of the time the emotional attitude factors can swing it. As I said, I don't really worry to much about the games you shouldn't have won, it's the games you lost that you should have won that are the negative side of what you should have produced as a coach. I think if you get your players to understand the purpose of the game is for them to find out about themselves--What kind of a man am I? How close can I come to playing at my maximum efficiency everytime?--then you get to be consistent.