

FOOTBALL COACHING PSYCHOLOGY:
A LOOK INTO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF PERSONALIZED COACHING ON HIGH
SCHOOL FOOTBALL PLAYERS AT LINCOLN NORTH STAR

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Abstract

Many high school football athletes do not have the access or the opportunity to work with a coach one on one to develop skills necessary for their position in football. With dozens of kids on a football team, kids often receive little personalized attention at practices as the coaches are trying to preach the big ideas of getting everyone on the same page. The small mistakes and fine details that players make in practice often go unnoticed and players can form bad habits, costing them when it comes to playing time, due to the fact that they are being outperformed by other players. Because of this notion, it was hypothesized that by working with the receivers and quarterbacks at a local high school over the summer, it would be possible to not only see improvement in their football skills but also to see increasing confidence levels in themselves. In order to see if this could be done, a documentary was filmed over the summer as the high school athletes participated in voluntary workouts with personalized training led by myself. The documentary was broken into three sections: pre-program interview questions, the workout program, and finally, the post-program interview questions. To start, a set of three questions was asked to the entire group of quarterbacks and receivers at Lincoln North Star. These pre-program questions gauged the athletes' thoughts about their current abilities, what they wanted to improve on, and also how confident they felt about their current abilities. After recording their answers the program was quickly installed. Two to three times a week, June through August, for approximately two hours each day, the athletes would participate in voluntary workouts with position-specific and skill-specific drills led by myself. If the athletes were found to be making a small mistake during a drill, it was possible to take the time to teach them the correct way to do it and to ensure that they were able to make the changes and become confident performing the drills that way. Throughout the workout and training program, improvements in skills were seen as they were incorporating the changes made through personalized coaching. The athletes seemed to have more fun as they began to perform better each workout. After the completion of the program, the athletes were asked three questions which served as the post-program questions. Their responses to these questions allowed for the evaluation of how they felt about their skills after going through the program all summer, what they still wanted to improve upon, and finally how confident they were in their abilities. From the beginning of the documentary when the athletes were asked the pre-program questions, to the end when they are asked the post-program questions, there was certainly an apparent overall increase in confidence levels by each athlete.

Key Words: football, coaching, psychology, training, confidence

Appreciation

I want to give a big thank you to my project faculty mentor Dr. Terry Housh, the head football coach at Lincoln North Star Tony Kobza, one of my best friends and also the documentary videographer Courtney Faller, and finally, the quarterbacks and wide receivers on the Lincoln North Star football team that I worked with. Without the hard work from everyone involved, this project would not have been possible.

**Football Coaching Psychology:
A Look Into the Psychological Effects of Personalized Coaching on High School Players
at Lincoln North Star**

Over the last three years that have comprised my college career, I have learned a lot about football, and specifically, how to play the wide receiver position. Throughout my midget football days and into high school I had always played quarterback. Before college, I really had no clue what playing wide receiver was like. When I first started classes in the fall of 2016 I decided that I was going to learn how to be a wide receiver. Coming out of high school I knew that if I wanted a chance at playing football at Nebraska, I would have to change positions as there were plentiful quarterbacks on the roster at the time. As soon as I set foot on campus, I began to work at becoming the best wide receiver I could possibly be in order to prepare myself for a walk-on tryout.

That first year of my college career, I was extremely lucky and met several other students that were also looking to join the team as walk-on wide receivers. Those first two years, I trained for two hours every day with these same guys in order to perfect my new craft. These new friends taught me the basics and also helped point me to sources online that would help further my education of the wide receiver position. After going through four tryouts over the span of three years and training for two hours each day that whole time, I attempted to transfer to Northwest Missouri State to play football there. I spent my whole summer of 2018 training with the team and learning their plays. This experience of going against some of the best defensive backs in Division 2 football helped me realize how far along I had come as a wide receiver, and it gave me confidence that I was truly skilled enough to play for a Division 1 team like Nebraska. When I was unable to complete the transfer to Northwest Missouri State due to financial reasons, I returned to Nebraska ready to give the walk-on tryouts another go. Sadly, I was denied a walk-on tryout all of 2018 and 2019 due to roster limitations. When I found out that there was no longer an opportunity for me to make the Nebraska football team as a wide receiver, I quickly realized that I had to utilize my new skills and knowledge of the wide receiver position for something.

Growing up in Lincoln, I attended Lincoln North Star for high school and played quarterback for the football team there. I knew from my experience there that the wide receivers received very small amounts of personalized coaching during practice due to time constraints and staff limitations. During practice the focus was usually on the bigger picture of getting the

team on the same page running plays, not exactly on the small details of each player during the plays. I knew that I could use my knowledge and my spare time to try and help fix this situation. After reaching out to Anthony Kobza, the head coach at Lincoln North Star, I decided that I could put together a program over the summer that would help work on the wide receivers' and the quarterback's skills. In order to bring in a psychological aspect to it all, I decided that I wanted to see how this personalized coaching affected not only their athletic abilities but also their thoughts about themselves as players. I wondered if this extra coaching attention could change their confidence levels. As a college student who is only a few years older than the athletes, I figured they might be able to relate to me more than their coaches.

For the creative project, I decided that I wanted to construct a documentary that would display the personalized coaching of the players first hand. I also wanted to show how the confidence levels changed from the beginning of the project until the end of the project. In order to gauge their confidence levels, I decided that I would ask them a set of questions both before and after the summer program. The players really enjoyed the idea that they were going to be in a documentary, and they always showed up to the workouts with enthusiasm, hoping they would make some good catches on camera.

Throughout the summer, the boys were dedicated to improving as players. I attempted to put on workout sessions two to three times each week, for approximately two hours each workout. With each workout, the players improved little by little. If there was ever a bad habit or a small mistake during a drill, I would make sure to take the time to explain how the skill or drill could be improved. The athletes usually always gave great effort to fix the little things quickly, in order to perform the drills and skills as well as they possibly could. By the end of the summer, each and every player that had come to the workouts consistently giving good effort showed leaps and bounds of progression. By viewing the documentary, it is easy to see the progression of the players from beginning to end, as well as an increase in confidence for practically every player. From my experiences constructing this project, I conclude that through personalized coaching of the wide receivers and the quarterback at Lincoln North Star, I was able to observe psychological effects on them, which included increased confidence levels, increased displays of extroversion, and decreased displays of introversion by the athletes.

Music Cited

“Work Hard”

Migos
Culture II
2018

“Praise The Lord (Da Shine)”

A\$AP Rocky feat. Skepta
Testing
2018

“Billie Jean”

Michael Jackson
Thriller 25
2008

“Heart of a Champion”

Nelly feat. Lincoln University Vocal Ensemble
Sweat
2004

“Insomnia”

Takeoff
The Last Rocket
2018

“Remember the Name”

Fort Minor feat. Styles of Beyond
The Rising Tied
2005

“Legend”

The Score
Atlas
2017

“HUMBLE”

Kendrick Lamar
DAMN
2017