

Coaching Winners: A Case Study of Two of the Most Successful  
Head High School Football Coaches in Georgia

A Dissertation submitted  
to the Graduate School  
Valdosta State University

in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in Leadership

in the Department of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology  
of the Dewar College of Education and Human Services

April, 2018

Robert William Schweizer

B.A., Bowling Green State University, 1994  
M.Ed., LaGrange College, 2005

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**Dissertation  
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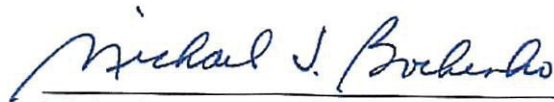


James L. Pate, Ph.D.  
Professor of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology

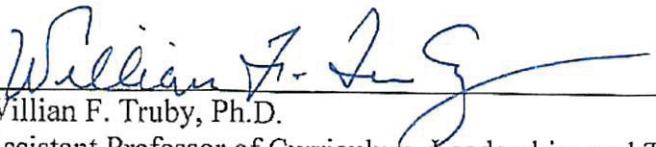
**Committee  
Members**



Herbert R. Fiester, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology



Michael J. Bochenko, Ed.D.  
Assistant Professor of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology



William F. Truby, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology

**Dean of the  
Graduate School**



James T. LaPlant, Ph.D.  
Professor of Political Science

**Defense Date**

4/25/2018

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## ABSTRACT

School leaders are under pressure to produce not only academic results but quality athletic and extracurricular programs. The most well recognized and publicized athletic program for high schools in Georgia is football. The football program is often the way in which citizens in the community identify and engage with the school and its stakeholders. This qualitative descriptive case study used interviews, observations, program literature, and historical documents to profile two of the winningest active head high school football coaches in Georgia. The coaches in this study are active head high school football coaches in Georgia with over 200 wins in their careers. The head coach participants in the study are Alan Chadwick, currently the head football coach at The Marist School, and Rich McWhorter, currently the head coach at Charlton County High School.

This study adds to the body of knowledge on head high school football coaches as institutional leaders at their schools. Although the two coaches were in very different settings, this work discovered some common themes in both coach's leadership styles. This dissertation also attempted to make a correlation to Kouzes and Posner's (2007) Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership from their book, *The Leadership Challenge*. These two successful head coaches model the behavior they expect of those in their organization with their work ethic and dedication, build a sense of community and esprit de corps on their teams, and rely on intensive off-season and in-season conditioning and weightlifting programs.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is no way I could have ever dreamed of finishing this endeavor if it wasn't for the following people:

My dissertation chair Dr. James Leon Pate: Dr. Pate was patient and coached me well through the course of this long journey. He never waivered and I am forever grateful for his guidance and leadership. He is a winner and a champion coach and there is no one better I could have on my team! He pushed this project through and I am proud to have worked with this amazing leader! He chose a great team to help me through. Many thanks to Dr. Michael Bochenko for his valued input and assistance and to Dr. William Truby for sticking up for a fellow Buckeye. I have enjoyed our time commiserating about the Browns, Indians, and Buckeyes and truly appreciate your guidance. Dr. Herbert Fiester: He guided the research portion of this project and I will be forever indebted to him for his advice and making it happen.

My godparents Uncle Nick and Aunt Betsy Martello: They always said I was their favorite even though I was really Aunt Frieda's favorite. The "godfather," Uncle Nick Martello who "played in every game while he was at Ohio State." I can't express in words how much you have inspired me and how honored I am to have you in my life. Thank you so much for everything!

Uncle Bud and Aunt Frieda Martello: I always was so grateful to have such wonderful folks in our family who also made the best strudel in the world. To all the cousins: We literally and figuratively grew up together, some more than others. I am so thankful to have grown up with such excellent and accomplished folks.

Mrs. Hemelgarn at St. Michael's Grade School: This great teacher taught me how to marginally write and let me be the editor of the sports section of our yearbook where I mainly wrote about myself in the third person.

Mr. and Mrs. Jim Fitzgerald and the entire Fitzgerald family: I love you all and miss Jim and Cathy more than you will ever know. They were a second pair of parents for me. These are the kind of folks that make America a place full of opportunity and hope. Thank you!

My coaches growing up: Coach Tom Bank, Coach John Gibbons, Coach Chuck Grebenz, Coach David Miller, Coach Doyn Trout, and to all the coaches who have inspired me and many others.

The wonderful and dedicated teachers at Lake Catholic High School: I wish I would have listened more and talked less!

My mentor teacher Tricia Schultz at Millenium High School: She just let me teach and taught me the right way to relate to students. This lady is an inspirational teacher!

Marnie Leonard, my mom at school: Thank you Marnie for being an excellent example of a caring teacher and even better person and mother.

My friend Coach Lynn Kendall: A class act in all circumstances and a great dad and teacher. You are an excellent person and even better friend and I would go to battle with you every day of the year. Thanks coach. I appreciate ya!

Coach Craig Garner: As dedicated a coach as you will find anywhere and a great

example of how a coach should build a program. Thanks for your tireless work on behalf of our school and students! This man is a great husband, father, and coach. I am honored to call you friend and to have you on our staff!

The football coaches who I am ever indebted to for their knowledge, wisdom and, for being just great people: Coach John Shalongo at Millenium High School for giving me a chance and letting me coach. The coaches I have worked with and learned so much from: Coach Ron Franks, Coach Tommy Walburn, Coach Bubba Jeter, Coach Chris Teal, Coach Stacey Brown, Coach Bryan Wallace, Coach Stacey Harden, Coach Daryl “Mudcat” Heard, Coach Rickey Parks, Coach James Wynn, Coach David Thrower, Coach Thermond Billingslea, and Coach Tanner Glisson. There are many others who do great work every day. Thank you all!

Thanks to the most awesome and caring teachers and coaches in Georgia, the faculty and staff at Troup County High School: I am blessed every day to be around such wonderful and dedicated folks. I feel so lucky to be part of the family. I can’t name you all but you know who you are and I hope you know how much I love and appreciate you all! These folks are awesome!

I have had some great principals to work with over the years. Bob Asadi took a chance on me at Millennium and I am forever grateful. Bill Parsons who hired me, inspired me, and lured me to Georgia. Michael Lehr who hired me in my first athletic director role, and Dennis “Chip” Medders, who set great expectations for us all. I hope we can reach them and bring home many state championships before we are through!

To my cousin Dan Martello: You always stood beside and me and stood up for me through good times and bad. “Your not just my cousin...” This is a great guy, do anything for ya’!

I am blessed to have many wonderful friends in my life. I know I will miss some but I have to try to name them: Devin and Tina Arnold and family, Lance and Michelle Hawks and family, Captain Jim Kibby, Bruce and Kim Schoonover and family, Dallas and Carolyn Black and family, Jeff “Greenie” and Carmen Greenwald and family, Chad Gazutis and family, Mike and Tammy Livengood and family, Todd and Jackie Jurgens and family, Debbie Fernandez, and Paige Biggs.

The best friends and teammates a person could have growing up: Richie Colasante and Jimmy Bianci.

Thanks to the best friends a kid from Cleveland could ever have, who have the biggest hearts in the world, and are the best husbands and fathers I know: Greg Fitzgerald, Mike Pecjak, Tom Slabe, and Joe Zeitz. Let’s go hit ‘em!

To all the foster children that have entered our lives and inspired us by showing us that even in the worst circumstances, you can open your heart and trust again, and live again, and love again.

I am so fortunate to come from a great home with many happy childhood memories. My mom and dad did a great job and raised four college graduates.

Retired Major Allen Schweizer, USMC is about the best big brother a guy could have. Mary Schweizer Child, Sue Bubonics, and Judy Schweizer are wonderful, smart, caring sisters and fantastic mothers. Thanks to Uncle Ed, a great guy and a great dad, for putting up with the crazy Schweizers.

I am so proud of my nieces Abby and Molly Child who are destined to be great coaches and super proud of my nephews Joey, Sam, and Charlie Boo! Finally, thank you to my one and only wife Heather and our three boys Jack, Nick and Ben. I couldn't have done it without you. I know I missed some of our time together because of this project but have learned that you all have my back! I am truly blessed! I love you and thank you!

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mom, Sandra Martello Schweizer, my first and best teacher,  
and to my dad, Allen Lewis Schweizer, my first and best coach.

To Heather and our boys Jack, Nick, and Ben.

## CHAPTER I

*No leader, however great, can endure for long unless he wins battles.*  
- Vince Lombardi

### INTRODUCTION

High school football coaching is a demanding, stressful, and competitive occupation. For better or worse, the high school football team in the American high school is often the way in which the community identifies with the school and judges the quality of the school and its programs. The measure of success for head high school football coaches is judged by their ability to win football games.

The term “coach” came into popular usage in America at the early colleges and universities. It was student slang for an academic tutor (The Random House College Dictionary, 1988). Much like a stagecoach would carry a passenger, this academic coach would “carry” a student through their examinations. What do these coaches do to carry their teams through to victory? There is no doubt, the communities view these coaches as institutional leaders.

The participants in this study are among the most successful current head coaches in Georgia to coach in more than 200 high school football games. Primary data sources were researcher observation of each coach’s interaction with their players and head coach and assistant coach interviews. Using a qualitative case study approach (Gillham, 2001;

Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 1994; Merriam, 1994; Stake, 1995) this study attempted to uncover the commonalities these successful head coaches share. The initial interview instruments were derived from Kouzes and Posner's (2007) Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership from their work, *The Leadership Challenge*, and the four key areas of Fetz, Chase, Moritz and Sullivan's (1999) *The Coaching Efficacy Scale II – High School Teams* (CES II-HST, 1999) that are described and discussed in Chapter Three. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for coding. Memos and field notes were written and coded to identify themes and evolving concepts. The goal of the study was to identify coaching techniques and behaviors that help players and teams be successful. This practice in context can be shared with other high school football coaches, and hopefully, improved coaching and leadership will result.

This work focused on coaches who have proven they can win games at the high school level in the state of Georgia. While it has been established that there are various outcomes that result when discussing successful coaches, the measurement this study employed is the number of games won. Winning games is essential for these men to be able to continue to coach at their respective schools (Edwards, 1973; Lackey, 1977, 1986, 1994; Miller, Lutz, Shim, Fredenburg, & Miller, 2006). Therefore, throughout the work, the term winning is synonymous with success or being successful.

#### Personal Background Narrative

It is important in qualitative research to understand the researcher's own biases and preconceptions. Therefore, I have included a personal history and narrative to enable the reader to understand my motivations and experiences better.



My earliest and favorite memories from childhood are playing football in the backyard with my brother, sisters, and neighborhood friends. I spent nearly every day of my childhood playing sports. Until the time I turned eight years old, my family lived in a small bungalow on Homden Road in South Euclid, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland. My brother, my two sisters and I, were intensely competitive in everything we did. We played football in the fall, basketball in the winter, and baseball in the spring.

I particularly remember our football games. We often played tackle. My older sister Mary would play right along with the boys. We did not treat her any differently than any of the boys in the neighborhood. Later, my younger sister Sue came along to join in our games, and she proved to be just as fierce. We would play football in the backyard with our neighbors until it was too dark to see, or more often until our mothers called us in. We dreamed of one day donning the scarlet and gray of the Ohio State Buckeyes (our mother's and grandfather's alma mater), and diving over the goal line like Chic Harley or Howard "Hopalong" Cassidy or Archie Griffin to secure yet another Buckeye victory.

We also dreamed of one day playing for our favorite professional team, the Cleveland Browns. We had the burnt orange and brown jerseys of our favorite players. In the backyard, we threw the ball like Otto Graham and kicked it like Lou "The Toe" Groza. We played the parts of our heroes, and we learned to be tough. We learned that sometimes things are not going to go your way, and it was how you responded to adversity that mattered in the end. We did not need parents to make rules for us or make

up teams. We learned what was fair by playing and making our own rules and making our own teams.

After years playing and coaching the sport, I can surmise that the real reason I grew to love the game of football was that nothing could interfere with our family's weekend routine in the fall. We cheered intensely for the Buckeyes on Saturdays and the Browns on Sundays. For the Browns' home games, my father and his lifelong friends would meet at the neighborhood bar at the end of the street, O'Brien's, and they would take a chartered neighborhood bus to Cleveland Municipal Stadium and pay a few dollars to sit in the bleachers and cheer on their beloved Browns. As we got older, he would take the kids along. On most Sundays, we would shiver in the stands as the wind would whip off Lake Erie, swirl around the stadium, and chill us to the core.

Later, my family moved to the Columbus, Ohio area. My maternal grandfather, Gilbert Martello, would drive down from Ashtabula and take us to Ohio State Stadium to watch the Buckeyes play. My grandfather was a middle and high school football coach, and later became the principal of the middle school my mother attended. He worked his way through an undergraduate degree and returned to complete a master's degree during the Great Depression by working various menial jobs and working as a trainer on the staff in the athletic department at Ohio State. My grandfather penned the first master's degree thesis in physical education ever written and approved at the university titled, *Physical Education Games Classified According to their Common Elements* (Martello, 1932). He would take us golfing in the summer when we went to visit him and everywhere we went people would come up and shake his hand. We would be at the

grocery store or at the ice cream stand. Grown men would come over and shake his hand and often give him a hug. These men would say things like, “This man put me through hell and I can’t thank him enough for it” or “Your grand-daddy was like a father to me.” These instances made an indelible impression on me. I wanted to be a football coach. I wanted to impact young people’s lives just like my grandfather.

Through my playing days, the men who coached our teams also had an incredible impact on me. My dad coached our little league baseball and our elementary school’s track teams (he was a hurdler and baseball standout in his youth), and I looked up to our coaches as I was growing up. They were my role models, and to a man, I don’t remember one who was not a high character individual. I came to believe that there was something inherently good with young people being involved in athletics. In my role as an educator, I have learned that the research on students involved in interscholastic sports and its positive impact on grade point average and graduation rate is quite compelling.

I played organized football beginning in the fourth grade and ending with an injury my senior year in high school. In high school, I was part of a very successful football program at Lake Catholic (Mentor, OH) and played in the state playoffs. In college, at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio, I played on two teams that were in contention for national championships in Rugby. I witnessed some diverse coaching styles during my playing years and became fascinated by the way each coach would motivate his players toward a common purpose.

I was a varsity high school football coach for several years and now I am an athletic director. I have been an assistant high school football coach, track coach,

assistant basketball coach, assistant athletic director, and head golf coach. I began my coaching and teaching career at a high school in Arizona where I taught history and English. I coached track and was an assistant football coach for two years in Arizona. I coach my children in their recreation league football and basketball endeavors and coached my oldest son in high school as the head ninth-grade coach when he was a freshman at our school. I have seen coaching from a parent's perspective and a coach's perspective, and now I oversee an athletics department with multiple female and male varsity sports and activities. In my work experience, I have observed that head coaches have to be leaders, motivators, organizers, counselors, advisors, and logistics specialists.

In 2008, I had an experience that changed the way I viewed the role of tradition in high school athletics. The most intimidating place I have ever played, coached or experienced a high school football game was in South Georgia on November 11, 2008. It was the first round of the state playoffs and our opponent had an explosive, talented team that eventually would go undefeated and win the AAAA Georgia State Championship that year. I was an assistant athletic director and was traveling with the team to procure the after-game meals, tape ankles, anything that needed to be done for the coaches. We walked into the stadium at least an hour and half before kickoff and the stands were nearly full and the sidewalk leading to the field was crowded with fans. They heckled our players yelling all sorts of intimidating jeers and even some rehearsed cheers. I remember one fan yelling, "Ya'll might as well just get back on that bus and head on back home. Y'all don't have a chance in hell a' beatin' them boys!" These were grown

men yelling at our players. They weren't necessarily mean-spirited or overly profane, but we got the picture. This was a hostile environment and we were not welcomed.

I had never experienced such vitriolic behavior from fans at a high school game, and the entire experience made us want to leave as quickly as we could. We were demoralized in the game 48-0. Remarkably, the most memorable thing to me was not their rabid fans or the menacing black uniforms that their imposing players wore, but it was the mascot or mascots.

After their first score, I heard a loud siren-like noise, like a loud train whistle. The noise came from one end of the field, behind one of the end zones, at what I thought was a brick barbecue pit. Then, I witnessed a group of about eight or ten male students dressed in overalls and straw hats stir in the pit with long wooden paddles. A huge blast of steam rose up from the ground accompanied by another loud hissing noise. I remember very clearly what I said. I asked one of the veteran coaches, "Coach, what in the Sam Hill are they doing over there?" I will never forget his response. He uttered, "Makin' syrup out of us!" I would learn rather regretfully and often that night that it was the Syrupmakers' tradition to blow the work whistle and stoke the fire to make the syrup every time they scored. Their mascots blew the whistle often that night at their brick syrup house and they made copious amounts of syrup on their way to defeat us.

In 2001, while I was an assistant football coach, our team traveled to play a team in northeast Georgia, and I witnessed another unique Georgia high school football tradition. It was the quarterfinal round of the state playoffs and the opposing team was undefeated at 11-0. It was December 7, 2001, and their stadium was at capacity with fans

standing on the track around the field and in all the walkways. Before the game, our head coach was speaking with his assistant coaches at midfield. I was running my players through pregame drills at one end of the field when I noticed a female student dressed as a Native American warrior riding a white horse across the track and onto the field. This “warrior princess” held a long spear with feathers and was dressed in a Native American wardrobe complete with feathered headdress.

I wanted our players to take in the moment so I stopped our drills as the rider kicked her horse into a full gallop and made her way toward the 50 yard line. The rider stopped her horse at the fifty-yard line and threw the spear into the turf. Although we managed to win the game in dramatic fashion 17-14 and advance in the state playoffs, this was quite an impressive sight to witness before a high school football game and it had an impact on our players.

These experiences are just some of the unique football traditions in the state of Georgia that had a tremendous impact on me. I remember thinking at the time, what an advantage to have all this atmosphere and tradition. This could really motivate a team and intimidate their opponents. This was my own motivation for wanting to study some of the unique traditions in high school athletics and see if there is a link between these traditions and success.

As a coach, I have worked with some very wise coaches and have been fortunate to be around several successful coaches. In 2001, I was on the coaching staff of our high school team that made it to the Georgia Dome to play in the football state semi-finals. The Georgia high school football state semi-final games (final four teams in each

classification) were played, for a time, in the Georgia Dome in Atlanta. Currently only state championship games are played in Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

I have also witnessed coaches struggle with being unsuccessful. I have seen how coaches have had to discipline players and deal with academic ineligibility. I have seen coaches grapple with a myriad of issues that handicapped their teams. By defining successful coaches as successful leaders, I want to improve coaching at the high school level and advance the professional nature of the American high school football coach.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the attributes that successful high school football coaches in the state of Georgia share. This study was also conducted to assist high school athletic directors and principals, the people involved in the hiring process, determine the qualities they should look for when hiring a new head football coach. The study discovered the unique traditions of the communities where these coaches live and work and examined how these traditions may contribute to their success. Moreover, the study examined the manner in which these men are perceived by their assistant coaches.

High school coaches and athletic directors want to improve coaching and leadership in high school athletics. This qualitative study of two of the most successful active football coaches in Georgia was designed to answer the following research questions: Research Question One (RQ1): What are the attributes that are shared among the most successful high school football coaches in the state of Georgia? Research Question Two (RQ2): What do these head coaches, assistant coaches, and former players,

perceive to be the leadership qualities that are necessary for success as a high school football coach? Research Question Three (RQ3): What are the unique traditions that are present at the schools where these men coach and how do these traditions assist in their success?

### Significance of the Study

This study could add to the literature about the personal attributes of effective leaders in high school football coaching. This study could also determine to what extent the coaches adhere to Kouze and Posner's (2007) Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership and if this is an effective model for head high school football coaches to follow.

The study could assist athletic directors and principals in hiring effective coaches. The study should also be helpful in developing coursework and materials for teacher and coaching education curriculum.

This study discovered some unique traditions present at the schools where these coaches work and tried to determine to what extent these traditions contribute to their success. This study is intended to improve the professional nature of the high school football coach in America.

### Conceptual Framework

The head high school football coach, above all else, is an organizational leader (Martens, 2004; Ramseyer, 2011). This study was conducted with some initial assumptions about what an organizational leader needs to be and do in order to be successful. However, while the study will employed, in the initial interviews, the tenets



of Kouzes and Posner's (2007) Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership, the goal was to let the coaches define themselves during their interviews.

Kouzes and Posner (2007) describe the five practices of exemplary leadership as: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart (p. 14). Using these widely accepted practices of exemplary leadership, I examine to what extent each coach engages in these tenets and how these leadership practices inform their behaviors as head coach.

These programs are all good if we judge them by the common standard of winning. This study attempted to uncover some intangible goodness that allows for the winning to occur (Walsh, 2009).

Kouzes and Posner (2007) define five traits that allow leaders to be successful. The first is to be an example to others by your actions. Kouzes and Posner (2007) describe Model the Way by noting that exemplary leaders go first. They go first by setting the example and following the values and beliefs. Furthermore, exemplary leaders are willing to work side by side with employees. Kouzes and Posner (2007) write, "Exemplary leaders know that if they want to gain commitment and achieve the highest standards, they must be models of the behaviors they expect of others" (p. 15).

Model the Way also involves personifying the shared values that you want to espouse for your organization and enabling others to model these values. Kouzes and Posner (2007) relate that in order to be a role model to the constituents in an organization, a leader must take action and develop a routine for questioning the tactics and strategies of the team.

Another aspect of modeling the behavior a leader wants each employee to emulate is to incorporate an element of storytelling into the organization. Storytelling can be a powerful force in relaying a leader's message and goals. It is also important to allow others in the organization to relate stories of when other constituents exemplified the organization's ethos or goals (Kouzes & Posner 2007).

Kouzes and Posner (2007) describe Inspire a Shared Vision by explaining that [exemplary leaders] envision exciting ideas and possibilities. Moreover, leaders must share their vision with their constituents and inspire others to reach their goals. They enlist others in a common vision. To do this, leaders must know the language of their constituents. They also share, "Leaders forge a unity of purpose by showing constituents how the dream is for the common good" (p.18).

In order to Inspire a Shared Vision, it is also essential that leaders appeal to the common ideals of the group by speaking effectively to the organization's shared goals and aspirations. In order to speak effectively, a leader must speak from the heart and have a certain gravitas or believability. This genuineness is the most important prerequisite to getting others to share in a leader's vision for their organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

A leader must also animate the vision for their organization or breathe life into the vision by creating tangible definitions of the values they espouse. To bring the vision to life, a leader must expand their expressive and communication skills by practicing being evocative and in some instances, provocative (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Kouzes and Posner (2007) define Challenge the Process as a change in the status quo. They offer, “Leaders are pioneers. They are willing to step out into the unknown. They search for opportunities to innovate, grow, and improve” (p.18). An exemplary leader must take chances, and do things differently than the way they have been done before. Leaders must also be learners. They learn from their failures and their victories and are able to move on.

In order to Challenge the Process, a leader must be willing to experiment with new ways of doing things. People are inherently adverse to change but when a leader can put them in control of the change, giving them tasks that are challenging but inside the realm of their talents or skill level, constituents will come to view change as full of possibilities (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

A leader must also take small wins when they are able to and publicize these minor victories to the group. Small wins produce winning attitudes because they set a pattern of success. People want to be allied with a winning venture because it reinforces the desire to feel successful (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Challenging the Process is often the most difficult aspect of being a leader. This is why it is of extreme importance to strengthen the resilience or hardiness of the organization and its constituents. This mental toughness can be achieved by stepping back from the change and assessing to gain some perspective, acquiring the new skills needed to handle the new challenges, and having a plan with milestones and a clear direction (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Enable Others to Act is described by Kouzes and Posner (2007) as the ability of exemplary leaders to, “foster collaboration and build trust”

(p.20). They [exemplary leaders] know that employees or team members must feel a sense of ownership in the process of achieving goals.

In order to Enable Others to Act, a leader must supply his team with the skills and knowledge to make them feel confident and successful. Ongoing training and coaching is an essential component to strengthening individual's commitment to the team's endeavors. Another key component in Enabling Others to Act is to increase individual accountability by supporting independent judgment and encouraging creative solutions to problems. A leader must also offer visible support to their team and celebrate successes as frequently and publicly as possible (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Lastly, a leader must use encouragement and single out individual excellence in order to Encourage the Heart. Using frequent recognition of individual accomplishments and bringing to light times when team members live out the values of the organization helps to foster a sense of pride and belonging. This effort to recognize the excellence in the organization helps to solidify the team, raise expectations, and build loyalty among team members (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Many fans of the sport idealize, if not idolize, some successful head football coaches. In many communities in Georgia, the head football coach has as much, if not more political clout, than the mayor (Schanke, 1996). At the very least, he is a well-known public figure in the community. His persona and personality are often the focal point of much speculation, debate, and press coverage. Kouzes and Posner (2007) offer in contrast that, leadership is not about the leader's personality, it is about the actions of the leader (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Using this framework to guide the interview topics and

inform the field observations allowed for a researched-based comparison of leadership styles of these successful head coaches.

#### Definition of Terms

*Coach.* The leader of a team who trains athletes. A person who is charged with developing athletes and carrying them forward to improvement (Herget, 2013; Tressell, 2008).

*Coaching Attributes.* Any quality or characteristic of a head coach that enables them to lead a team towards a common goal.

*Game Strategy.* The ability of a coach to manage a game successfully by making timely decisions on elements of the game included, but not limited to, play calling, scheme, and clock management (Martens, 2004).

*High School Football Traditions.* Any unique ritual, custom, or activity that is continued from year to year by the student body, faculty, or administration of a secondary school designed to promote or support the football team of that school (Gilmore, 2013; Nelson, 2011).

*Motivation Efficacy.* The personal judgment of an individual coach's own capability at motivating his team to perform (Feltz, et al. 1999).

*Successful Coaching.* For the purposes of this study, winning is the sole criteria chosen to define a successful coach.

#### Organization of the Study

This study is presented in seven chapters. Chapter One describes the context and purpose of the study and defines the research questions the study will attempt to answer.

Also included in Chapter One is the significance of the study, the conceptual framework, and a definition of terms as used in the work.

Chapter Two is a review of the literature on winning coaches beginning with the historical evolution of football coaching. Chapter Two also includes sections on the role of the coach in schools, attributes of successful coaches, coaching efficacy and competencies, the way traditions and rituals are evident in high school football in the state of Georgia, and a section on the confluence of coaching and leadership.

Chapter Three includes the methodology of the study and research design. Chapter Three also includes a listing of the research questions, a description of how the participants were selected and why they were selected, methods of data collection, data analysis, reliability and validity, and describes any perceived limitations of the study.

Chapter Four is the case study of Head Coach Alan Chadwick.

Chapter Five is the case study of Head Coach Rich McWhorter.

Chapter Six is the cross-case analysis and findings.

Chapter Seven, the final chapter, discusses the implications for practice and recommendations for the future.

## Chapter II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

There is such a deluge of coaching books and biographies that to catalog and annotate all the works written about football coaching would be a life-long endeavor. While I have read and noted hundreds of football coaching books, biographies, and articles, this literature review focuses on the history and evolution of the head coach in the American game of football and examines the researched-based components that make up a winning football coach.

#### Historical Evolution of American Football Coaching

American Football evolved from the English Union version of Rugby (Camp, 1891; Danzig, 1957; Miller, 2011). The game of Rugby originated at the Rugby School in England in 1823 when William Webb Ellis picked up the ball one day while playing soccer and decided to run with it to score the winning points before the curfew bell tolled (Danzig, 1957; Herget, 2013; Miller, 2011).

Rugby, or a form of it, was played at Harvard during 1840s and 50s but it was poorly organized and included few rules (Herget, 2013). The game usually involved more of a hazing ritual with the incoming freshmen class, and usually resulted in many injuries. These games came to be known at Harvard and other schools as the “class rush” and

involved as many as one hundred students on a team. These spectacles became so violent that the event came to be known as “Bloody Monday” and Harvard would eventually ban this activity for ten years after the 1859 game (Herget, 2013).

In 1857, Thomas Hughes published *Tom Brown’s School Days*, his fictionalized account of his days spent at the Rugby School as a student. Hughes’s novel featured playing the game of Rugby as one of its central themes and the book was wildly popular and influential in America (Herget, 2013). Eventually, Harvard began playing Rugby again in 1871 and the game, or a form of it was still being played by Boston area by high school students throughout the 1860s. This game was usually called the “Boston Game” or “Boston Rules Football” and resembled more of what Americans think of as soccer (Herget, 2013; Reyburn, 2013).

The first person to ever be called a football “coach” in the athletic sense of the word was Lucius N. Littauer at Harvard in 1881. He did not receive any compensation, and the captains of the next year team took over for him after only one year (Herget, 2013).

Several scholars have written extensively on the subject of what it takes to be a successful coach and leader in the American game of football. In perhaps the first published book on the subject, *American Football* (1891), Walter Camp, who most consider the “Father of American Football” and perhaps the first authentic “coach”, although unpaid, noted that it was imperative to have a plan and a leader of the team. At the American game’s inception, Camp understood that organization and leadership were key components to a successful football program. He instructed that team play was the



road to victory and captains and coaches [should] spend far more time and thought over the conduct of the campaign as a team than doing individual drills (Camp, 1891). At Camp's side was his wife, Alice Sumner Camp, who would attend practices and take notes when Camp could not attend. Camp was busy with his successful watchmaking company and often would have his wife coach the team. Alice Camp monitored practices, offered advice on strategy, and attended team meetings. In a 1913 dinner program commemorating the team's 1888 undefeated team, the program reads, "The head coaches of Yale Football Team of 1888, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Camp" (Reyburn, 2013, p. 52). Mrs. Camp may have been the second authentic football coach in America as Susan Reyburn (2013), in her book, *Football Nation; Four Hundred Years of America's Game*, notes that one of the best football minds in America belonged to Alice Sumner Camp, whose husband coached at Yale.

However, at the American game's organized beginning in the 1870s, the coach played a limited role in the operation of the earliest teams at Rutgers, Columbia, Harvard, Princeton, and Yale (Miller, 2011). The captain, an upperclassman appointed by his peers, usually directed practices and game-time strategy.

The first paid high school and college coach was Amos Alonzo Stagg who played at Yale for six years and graduated in 1888. He intended to become a minister, so he enrolled at the Springfield, Massachusetts YMCA or the Springfield Christian School after graduating from Yale. While he was at Springfield, he was asked to coach for The Williston Seminary School, a secondary school in Easthampton, Illinois, where he was paid a small fee (Herget, 2013). In 1882, Stagg accepted the position as head football

coach for the University of Chicago and received a \$2,500.00 salary and a tenured position as the head of the athletic department (Herget, 2013; Lester, 1999).

In Georgia in 1895, Glenn “Pop” Warner became the head football coach at the University of Georgia for \$35.00 a week (Herget, 2013). One would not see Stagg, Camp, or Warner pacing the sidelines during a game. During their early tenure as coaches, they were made to sit in the stands during contests and could not substitute players or give directions. They could not even have players relay their coaching advice to the team, a practice used by some coaches today known as “running plays in.” They coached their teams during practices and at halftime only (Herget, 2013; Reyburn, 2013).

In one of the earliest works on the new sport, Chicago University’s Amos Alonzo Stagg and Henry L. Williams, in their 1893 book, *A Scientific and Practical Treatise on American Football for Schools and Colleges*, did not offer much coaching advice. Rather, they did entreat players to study the strategy and tactics of the game. Again, the game was new as was the idea of the influence of the coach on the team’s success. It would seem natural that Stagg and Williams wanted their players to read about the game and gain any knowledge they could.

In 1893, Yale’s Walter Camp and Harvard’s Lorin F. Deland collaborated and produced a work simply titled *Football*. Deland was a chess expert and military strategist who had never played the game. His team rolled over Camp and the Yale Bulldogs using his new invention, the flying wedge. This “mass” play with the line forming a wedge and holding on to each other was arguably the most dangerous and effective play since the game’s inception. Strategy was beginning to find its place in the new game. Camp and

Deland (1893) were still reluctant to recognize the coach as the leader of the team and instead focused on the qualities the playing captain should have in order to be a good leader.

It would take almost a half-century after the first official American intercollegiate game between Rutgers and Princeton in 1869 before coaches were recognized as truly valuable to the success of a football team. It was after a game played in 1913 with Notre Dame famously beating Army using the newly conceptualized forward pass, for the idea of the coach as leader, strategist, and professional to begin to take hold. In his detailed compilation, *The History of American Football* (1957), Allison Danzig writes of this climatic event, “The professional coach was becoming recognized and sought out by schools who were content to have the captain of the year before take charge of the team without pay. The professional [coach] was gaining in stature and achieving a fame that was more than local” (p. 203).

There was one man involved in that 1913 game who would perhaps change the role of the American football coach more than any other (Danzig, 1957). Knute Rockne was a 22-year-old veteran postal clerk from Chicago who arrived in South Bend, Indiana with a suitcase and \$1,000.00 (Rockne, 1931). In the 1913 game versus Army, Notre Dame quarterback Gus Dorais, under the direction of head coach Jess Harper, completed 13 forward passes. One of his passes was a touchdown to third-team All-American Knute Rockne. Rockne would graduate in 1914 and become a chemistry teacher and assistant coach at Notre Dame, and eventually take over as the head coach of the Fighting Irish (Rockne, 1931).

Rockne's life and coaching career were chronicled in several works including Rockne's unfinished autobiography published after his death in 1931 and Michael Steele's work, *Knute Rockne: Portrait of a Notre Dame Legend* (1998). Rockne died in a plane crash at the age of 43 while flying to Hollywood to assist in the production of the movie, *The Spirit of Notre Dame* in 1931 (Steele, 1998). Knute Rockne's teams went 105-12-5 in his 13-year tenure as Notre Dame's head coach. Rockne publicized his teams tirelessly and popularized American football by advancing the passing game (Quakenbush, 1988). His pregame motivational speeches, although often contrived, were depicted in Hollywood movies and he grew the program at Notre Dame exponentially during his leadership (Quakenbush, 1988; Rockne, 1931; Steele, 1998). Rockne sought ways to expand and popularize the game while he wielded extreme power in his operation of the football program. Rockne found larger venues for Notre Dame games and had his team play at Ebbets Field in New York and the Polo Grounds (Quakenbush, 1998). In 1913 Notre Dame's Cartier Field sat 3,000, too small for Rockne's ever-popular teams. By 1930, Rockne's last season, the school had a stadium seating 54,000 (Quakenbush, 1988; Steele, 1998).

As the American game grew in popularity so did the role of the coach on the team as a leader (Danzing, 1956; Easterbrook, 2013; Herget, 2013). By the 1930s the professional game of football was beginning to grow in popularity and become more acceptable. Professional sports were looked down upon by many coaches and athletes during this era as being corrupt. Players were encouraged to maintain their amateur status and remain loyal to their college, club, or workplace teams (Reyburn, 2013). In today's

game, high school and college teams take their lead from professional coaches but, this was not always the case (Reyburn, 2013).

One catalyst for this change was Harold “Red” Grange. In 1925, Grange, who came to be known as “The Galloping Ghost” because of his elusive running style, may have saved professional football in America (Davis, 2005; Reyburn, 2013). By November of 1925, the professional sport of American football had a poor reputation and was suffering from devastating financial woes. Teams were losing money, and few fans attended the games (Reyburn, 2013). Grange was a three-time All-American and national collegiate star for The University of Illinois. Grange decided to play for the National Football League’s (NFL) Chicago Bears just five days after his season at Illinois had concluded for the unheard of sum of \$100,000. The Chicago Bears went on a “blitz” traveling around the country and playing a series of contests in succession. The Bears played nineteen games from late November 1925 to late January 1926. Grange’s immense popularity filled stadiums and team owners began to realize a profit for the first time. During the “blitz” the team traveled to New York’s Polo Grounds and an estimated 73,000 fans, including Babe Ruth, paid to watch Grange run through defenders (Davis, 2005; Herget, 2013; Reyburn, 2013). The Bear’s blitz and Grange’s performances gave professional football a sense of legitimacy and it demonstrated to potential owners that, with the right personnel, the NFL could be a profitable business (Reyburn, 2013).

Red Grange’s coach was George “Papa Bear” Halas who led his team of meatpackers from the Staley Meat Packing Plant on the blitz that winter (Davis, 2005). Halas took on many roles as a team owner and coach and expanded the role of the coach

as leader of the team (Davis, 2005; Reyburn, 2013). Reyburn writes, “Illinois grad George Halas, aptly known as ‘Mr. Everything,’ also wore many hats, as well as a helmet, since he not only owned the Chicago Bears but was also the coach, PR man, ticket seller, team ankle wrapper, and starting receiver/defensive end” (p. 119). Halas started the Bears as a workplace club from the Decatur, Illinois Staley Meat Packing Plant where he was a foreman. Halas eventually moved the team to Chicago and he played a pivotal role in the growth and success of the NFL. He is credited with such innovations as the “T” formation and putting a man in motion before the snap of the ball. He also signed Red Grange into the struggling league and popularized the game by the first use of public announcement systems and radio broadcasts (Davis, 2005; Reyburn, 2013).

Another innovator of the high school, college, and professional game who grew the role of the coach as a leader, was Ohio’s Paul Brown (Reyburn, 2013). Brown began his career as a high school football coach after attending Miami of Ohio University where he played quarterback. Brown started his coaching career at The Severn School in Maryland where he won a Maryland High School State Championship in 1931. He then took the head football coaching job at his high school alma mater, Massillon Washington, where he would forge the most successful high school program in Ohio prep history (Cantor, 2008; O’Toole, 2008). Brown was hired by Ohio State in 1941 and would become the head coach of the NFL’s Cleveland Browns from 1946 through 1962. The team was named after Brown by a player vote. In 1963, Brown was fired by owner Art Modell for wanting to maintain complete control of the football operations and play

calling (Cantor, 2008; O'Toole, 2008). In 1967, the NFL announced it would put a franchise in Cincinnati and Brown became a partner in the NFL's Cincinnati Bengals, owning the third largest share of the operation and becoming the head coach and general manager (Cantor, 2008; O'Toole, 2008).

In addition to Brown's accomplishments in high school coaching, he was able to win a National Championship at Ohio State in his second season and his Cleveland Browns appeared in ten straight championship games and won seven of them (Cantor, 2008; O'Toole, 2008). Brown was also an innovator and perhaps molded the role of the modern football coach more than any other (Cantor, 2008; O'Toole, 2008; Reyburn 2013). Some of his innovations include: calling plays from the sidelines for quarterbacks; giving IQ and personality tests to players; hiring a full time coaching staff; scouting opponents using game film; keeping the team together the night before games and instilling a curfew; organizing practices with a written plan that is shared with all coaches; systemizing the college draft; devising the first face mask for helmets; inventing the taxi squad, breaking the color barrier in professional football; and inventing the draw play (Cantor, 2008; McKaskey, 2015; O'Toole, 2008). Brown was not universally liked by his players or his assistant coaches as he insisted on complete control of as many things in the operation of the football team as possible. However, he influenced many important coaches in the game including Vince Lombardi, Bill Walsh, Chuck Noll, Don Shula, and Bill Belichick (Cantor, 2008; McKaskey, 2015; O'Toole, 2008).

New England Patriots head coach and winner of four Super Bowls, Bill Belichick, is quoted in George Cantor's 2008 work, *Paul Brown; The Man Who Invented Modern*

*Football*, saying, “So many of the things we do today are the same things Paul Brown did...[and] it’s very much the blueprint for the way the game is played today”

(p. 2). Brown started a tradition in Stark County, Ohio, where his former high school Massillon Washington is located, that is carried on today. Every male child born in Stark County is given a miniature orange football and this football is usually placed in the crib at the hospital by the president of the high school football team’s booster club (Hopkins, 2008).

Today, football coaches at all levels wield tremendous authority over the day to day operation of their teams (Easterbrook, 2013; Martens, 2004; Kralic, 2008). While not all situations are the same, the head football coach is the person who gets credit for the team’s success and the blame in defeat (Martens, 2004; Ramseyer, 2011).

#### The Role of the Coach in Schools

The role of the coach has come full circle since the early days of Camp, Stagg, Yost, and Rockne and although they are the earliest examples we have, this review will focus mainly on the role of the coach at the high school level. In his 2011 work, *The Skills, Strategies, and Plays for Winning Football*, longtime college coach Bill Ramseyer describes the role of the modern coach wanting to control everything in their power in the day to day operation of the football program (Ramseyer, 2011).

Ty Cashion’s 1998 work, *Pigskin Pulpit; A Social History of Texas High School Football Coaches*, examines the role of the high school football coach and his or her role in society and in the high schools where they are employed. The work underscores the notion that American football coaching has evolved over the last century. Cashion



explores the idea that coaches have a tremendous impact on their players and effective coaches teach their players the traditional values of hard work, sacrifice, and team-work. Coaches have had to evolve their philosophies over time in order to be effective in the current milieu of societal pressures and influences. Cashion offers that the purpose of his book is to exhibit this evolution and to explore the continuity of values and concessions that modern football coaches have had to make in a diverse and ever-changing society (Cashion, 1998).

The National Federation of High School Coaches (NFHS) has adopted Ranier Martens' work, *Successful Coaching* (2004), as the text they use to teach their Coaching Principles Curriculum. Martens offers various definitions of successful high school football coaching and readily admits that most will judge coaches by their winning record. He also states, "But successful coaching is much more than winning contests. Successful coaches help athletes master new skills, enjoy competing with others, and develop self-esteem. And successful coaches not only teach athletes sports skills, they also teach and model the skills athletes will need to live successfully in our society" (p. vi). Bill Ramseyer (2011) a longtime successful college coach offers, "As long as a score is kept, winning will remain a vital part of success on the football field, but winning should never mean sacrificing other factors that determine achievement" (p.1).

The role of the modern high school football coach has evolved to one where he requires and maintains complete control of football operations (Martens, 2004). Examples at the college level are successful well-known coaches Woody Hayes and

Urban Meyer at Ohio State and Paul “Bear” Bryant and Nick Saban at The University of Alabama.

At the high school level, there are some nationally recognized successful coaches. The head high school football coach with the most wins of all time currently in America is John McKissick of Summerville High School in Summerville, S.C., who at the end of the 2014-15 season retired with 621 wins. In his book, *Called to Coach* (McKissick & Baker, 1993) McKissick writes, “In 1952, I coached football, boys and girls basketball, and baseball. My salary for coaching all four sports, teaching five periods of history, and being the athletic director was \$3,000.00. I certainly didn’t get into coaching to get rich, did I?” (p. 43). McKissick’s duties changed over the years. He became an assistant principal at the school and remained the head football coach (McKissick & Baker, 1993). When he first became an assistant principal, he was also in charge of supervising 52 bus drivers and their routes. He was also the athletic director and head football coach. McKissick witnessed integration and the combining of the schools in his district and maintained many of his administrative duties while remaining in the head football coaching position (McKissick & Baker, 1993).

McKissick (1993) emphasizes teamwork above all else and what he terms the “we” attitude. He believes football teaches students more about life than any other activity and that teamwork teaches them valuable lessons they will apply to their lives after they leave the game. The “we” attitude involves putting the team above your individual accomplishments and being able to sacrifice for the good of the team. The

“we” attitude is about being unselfish and working together for a common goal or purpose (McKissick, 1993).

Second on the list of most wins of any head high school football coach in the United States is J.T. Curtis of John Curtis Christian High School in River Ridge, Louisiana (MaxPreps.com, August 17, 2015). Curtis is the active coach with the most all-time wins at 542. Curtis led his team to a 12-2 record in 2015 and his teams have averaged 12 wins a season since he started coaching the Patriots in 1969 (MaxPreps.com, August 17, 2015). Curtis is featured in the work, *Hurricane Season; A Coach, His Team, and their Triumph in the Time of Katrina* (Thomas & Curtis, 2007) about his school and team enduring the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina. The work illuminates Curtis’s role at the school starting off as a teacher and eventually becoming the headmaster after his father, the school’s founder and builder, stepped down due to health reasons in 2005.

Curtis’s role at the school is somewhat unique in that his father founded and built the school literally with his own hands (Thomas & Curtis, 2007). In 1962 John Curtis Sr., after teaching a few years at an inner-city school in New Orleans, decided to open his own private Christian school that would allow all students, regardless of their ability to pay tuition, a chance to succeed (Thomas & Curtis, 2007). The John Curtis School in River Ridge, Louisiana attracts students from racially and economically diverse backgrounds from in and around New Orleans and Jefferson Parish. Mr. Curtis, as he was known to all the stakeholders at the school, would often work out arrangements for student’s whose families were unable to pay the relatively affordable tuition. The parents

could drive a school bus or work in the school's cafeteria to help pay for tuition (Thomas & Curtis, 2007).

Head coach J.T. Curtis relies on the development of the players he gets from the "playground" system in and around New Orleans (Thomas & Curtis, 2007). The playgrounds are not the traditional type of playgrounds with swing sets and slides but rather neighborhood playing fields where organized and not very organized football, baseball, and basketball games among youngsters take place. Curtis coaches scourer these playgrounds for young talent and entice the parents of gifted athletes to enroll their children at the school. These players often develop into starters on the varsity squad (Thomas & Curtis, 2007). The system J.T. Curtis uses emphasizes team play above all else. The Patriots run an "old fashioned" veer option offense where players do not rack up individual statistics. Players must be unselfish and have complete "buy in" to be able to play for J.T. Curtis (Thomas & Curtis, 2007). "Buy in" is the willingness of a player or coach to follow the leadership of the head coach and put the team, and its goals, above individual accomplishments. Curtis also relies on an intense spring and summer conditioning and weight training program that often pushes students to the brink of exhaustion. Curtis has a "no cut" policy where if a student makes it through spring and summer workouts and comes to practice, he is on the team. Curtis believes that coaches need to give adolescent student-athletes time to develop. This patience has paid off for Curtis. As of the summer of 2015, Curtis's Patriots have won 26 football state championships (MaxPreps.com, April 17, 2017).

Another well-respected head high school football coach is Bob Ladouceur of

De La Salle High School in Concord, California. Ladouceur was featured in the film, *When the Game Stands Tall* (Tristar Pictures, 2014). The film chronicles his team's historic 151 game winning streak, how that streak ended, and the lessons he taught his players through the experience. Ladouceur retired from his head coaching role in 2013 with 399 career wins. Ladouceur is now an assistant on the football staff, teaching physical education and religion classes. During Ladouceur's career, he remained a full time religion teacher at the school, teaching a full schedule of classes during the day (Ladouceur & Hayes, 2015). He writes about his role in the high school in his 2015 book, *Chasing Perfection; The Principles Behind Winning Football the De La Salle Way*, stating, "We were never fighting for wins. We were fighting for a belief in what we stood for, the way we believe life should be lived and people should be treated. Winning is a by-product of how you approach life and relationships" (p. xi).

Ladouceur repeatedly stresses the importance of team building and having the players "buy in" to the beliefs and the traditions of the football program. Ladouceur viewed himself as much more than just a winning football coach at the school. He wanted to use football as a way of making a difference in the lives of the players he coached. Throughout his career, Ladouceur remained a full-time teacher in the classroom (Ladouceur & Hayes, 2015).

The trend for high school football coaches teaching in the classroom all day and coaching football in the evenings and on Friday nights is waning (Allen, 2006). Football has become a year-round endeavor for high school coaches and their presence in the academic classroom is diminishing. For instance, in 2008, a 1700 student high school in

rural south Georgia, hired a former successful Alabama head high school coach as director of football operations/head football coach with no teaching duties (*New York Times*, November 5, 2008). The coach's sole responsibility was to turn around a once proud and successful football program that had fallen on hard times. After struggling to a four-win season his first year the coach has had double digit wins every year since 2009 with the exception of 2010 when the team went 9-3. The coach's record since coming to the school, as of the end of the 2015 season, is 86-25. His team won the Georgia 6A (at the time the largest classification) state football championship in 2014 and had an unblemished perfect season finishing 15-0 (ghsfha.org, n.d.). They followed that accomplishment with another perfect season and state championship in the 2015 season.

This trend is expanding throughout the south. A growing number of football coaches, especially in larger classifications, don't teach classes (Allen, 2006 ; Kralic, 2008). In many instances, if a coach does teach during the day, their teaching duties include classes such as weight-training, which for many programs is an extension of football practice (al.com, November 14, 2014).

In 2014 in Alabama, a head coach was lured away from his previous school with a \$91,000 base salary as director of football operations and another \$32,000 to be head football coach and an agreement that he would have no teaching duties (al.com, November 14, 2014). The role of football coach as a classroom teacher first is diminishing at the high school level.

## Attributes of Successful Coaches

The successful NFL coach Vince Lombardi perceived winning as a transformational process that becomes a habit for an organization (Phillips, 2001). Lombardi believed that confidence and winning were contagious. Lombardi suggests that winning was not only the measure of success for his teams but he also used it to motivate his players and staff (Phillips, 2001).

Don Shula, who led his 1973 Miami Dolphins to the only undefeated season in National Football League history, believes that winning is what defines a coach as a leader (Blanchard & Shula, 2001). He is credited with the mantra, “Victory if possible, integrity at all costs” (Blanchard & Shula, 2001, p. 86). This idea that character and winning go hand in hand is prevalent in the coaching community. Lombardi, as cited in Phillips, has said, “The quality of a man’s life has got to be a measure of that man’s personal commitment to excellence and victory, regardless of what field he may be in” (p. 171).

Coaching is teaching (Blanchard & Shula, 2001; Lombardi, 2001; Martens, 2004;). The idea of an athletic “coach” came into popular usage in the early 1870s (Miller, 2011). In his book, *The Big Scrum; How Teddy Roosevelt Saved Football*, John J. Miller offers, “Around the same time [1870s] the word coach evolved into its modern form. Previously, it referred to private tutors who prepared students for academic tests, but that definition was soon eclipsed by its new meaning in athletics” (p. 42). Lombardi offers, “They call it coaching, but it is teaching. You do not just tell them it is so. You

show them the reasons why it is so and then you repeat and repeat until they are convinced, until they know” (Phillips, 2001, p. 90).

In 2008, successful Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel published his yearly team book, *The Winners Manual for the Game of Life*. Tressel self-published this book every year in addition to the playbook for his teams. There were motivational stories, quotes, and poems throughout the work. He relates some of the etymology of the word “coach” being from the idea of a stagecoach (Tressel, 2008). The stagecoach was designed to move people and goods from one place to another. The coach is supposed to move people from one place in their development to a more advanced place (Tressel, 2008).

In 2007, Gavin Kralic, a head high school football coach in the state of Washington, set out to tour twelve of the most successful high school football programs in the country. His resulting work, *Gridiron Dynasties* (2008), attempted to, “determine common factors among elite programs, identify unique approaches to the game of high school football, and examine high school football across ten states through the lens of twelve of the most successful programs in the country” (p. viii). Kralic identified some common factors among successful programs. He concluded that while these things are beneficial, they may not be a necessity in building a winning team. Generous financial resources are not a must, vibrant youth football in the community is not always necessary, and rosters that produce a large number of Division I football talent are not common among these programs (Kralic, 2008). He does offer that the common factors to success were: communities and administrators place a great importance on the development of student-athletes; head coaches relied on their assistant coaches to be



unified and loyal to the overall goals of the program; a consistently superior strength and conditioning program is a must; team building is a focal point of each program; and each school runs the football effectively (Kralic, 2008).

### High School Football Coaching and Leadership

Kouzes and Posner (2007) emphasize the importance of leaders to be coaches and to let others take ownership of their situation. A high school football coach cannot go out on the field and execute plays. A high school football coach must trust his players to perform how they have been taught (Allen, 2006; Gilmore, 2013). More importantly, he must build their trust in him as their leader if he wants his team to be successful (Martens, 2004; Walsh, 2009; White, 2004). High school football coaching, by its nature, allows for young people to take responsibility for the outcome of their efforts (Allen, 2006; Martens, 2004). High school coaches, as leaders of their teams, are forced to let their constituents make choices (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Kouzes and Posner also offer that the effective coach “develops the capabilities of their team and fosters self-confidence through the faith they demonstrate letting other people lead” (pp. 267-268).

David H. White, Jr., for his work, *Leadership Lessons for Life; Alabama High School Head Football Coaches Favorite Quotes and Inspirational Stories* (2004), interviewed over 40 of the most successful head high school football coaches in Alabama. White found that the coaches that were effective leaders instilled an esprit de corps mentality in their teams. They fostered the notion that the team was more important than individual accomplishments and that players were accountable to each other. This idea of esprit de corps, found in elite and effective military outfits, fosters an allegiance

to the union of the team. An effective leader creates an environment where team players are held accountable by each other and a sense of shared responsibility and camaraderie develops (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; White, 2004).

White (2004) describes the role of the coach as the leader of the organization and stresses that the coach is the teacher of not only football skills, but life lessons and how to be a contributing member of the community. A predominate theme of overcoming adversity is evident in each interview White (2004) conducted. White relates several incidents in which the head coach had to model effective behavior in order to get his team through difficult events.

Perry Gilmore (2013) stresses the importance of the coach as the leader by instilling a sense of pride in the team's work ethic. White (2004) also recognizes the importance of the head coach, as the leader of the organization, to emphasize the relevance and importance of the tradition of the team and the school. The coach as the leader should recognize and emphasize the importance of rivalry games, team colors, past coaches, past players, school pride, neighborhood pride, and the heritage of the school's programs.

Randy Allen, a successful head high school football coach in Texas, in his 2006 book, *Coaching by the Book; The Purpose and Passion of a High School Football Coach*, emphasizes the importance of shared leadership within a football organization. Allen, who is an active head high school football coach and has amassed over 350 wins in his career, stresses the importance of the leaders of the team providing and maintaining team unity. Allen relates that it is crucial for a coach to empower the players on the team and

let them take ownership of their season. As the leader of the team the head coach is charged with developing a systematic approach to leadership that's main goal is team unity (Allen, 2006).

Allen (2006) stresses the importance of the head coach's ability to motivate players and that tradition plays an important role in motivation. It is important for coaches to honor and respect the traditions that are at the institutions where they coach (Allen, 2006; White, 2004).

### Coaching Efficacy and Competencies

The most current and chief instrument used to measure high school head coaching efficacy is the 31 item *The Coaching Efficacy Scale II – High School Teams* (CES II-HST, 1999). *The Coaching Efficacy Scale II – High School Teams* asserts that there are four key areas that are related to one another and define coaching effectiveness for high school head coaches (Feltz et al., 1999). These four areas are motivation, game strategy, technique, and character building (Feltz et al., 1999). Motivation efficacy is defined as the confidence coaches have in their ability to motivate and affect the psychological mood of their players (Feltz et al., 1999). Game strategy is defined as the confidence coaches have in their ability to lead during contests while technique is defined as the coach's perceived effectiveness in their ability to teach the skills specific to their sport (Feltz et al., 1999). Finally, character building is defined as the confidence coaches have in their ability to forge a positive attitude among their athletes and help each student-athlete to personally develop (Feltz et al., 1999).

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) has outlined the key competency domains that all coaches should possess (NASPE, 2006). The eight key competencies for coaches are: Philosophy and Ethics, Safety and Injury Prevention, Physical Conditioning, Growth and Development, Teaching and Communication, Sport Skills and Tactics, Organization and Administration, and Evaluation (NASPE, 2006).

The first domain, Philosophy and Ethics, entails a coach's ability to focus on the safety, development, and the well-being of the student-athletes they coach. This competency implores coaches to act appropriately and ethically in dealing with student-athletes and to practice good sportsmanship in game situations (NASPE, 2006).

Secondly, the Safety and Injury Prevention domain explains that the coach may be the first responder in the case of an injury or accident and should be trained in emergency care and first aid. The coach should also recognize potentially dangerous situations or environments, and make appropriate decisions regarding the safety of the athletes they coach (NASPE, 2006). The third domain is Physical Conditioning which requires coaches to provide safe, low-risk training practices that will prepare athletes to perform to the best of their abilities. The coach should also promote healthy lifestyle choices and use research-based training practices and techniques (NASPE, 2006). The fourth domain is Growth and Development. This domain recognizes the need for each coach to be trained and knowledgeable in age and skill appropriate activities for their athletes. The coach needs to be able to create effective learning environments taking into consideration the motor, cognitive, emotional and social development of their athletes (NASPE, 2006). The fifth domain, Teaching and Communication, emphasizes the need for each coach to

provide a positive learning experience for each athlete by having organized practices, prepared itineraries for team events, and communicated goals for individuals and the team. This domain also recognizes the coach as a teacher of the fundamentals of the sport they coach. The coach must be familiar with multiple techniques in teaching the skills and strategies of the sport to their team and be able to effectively and professionally communicate with all stakeholders (NASPE, 2006). The sixth domain is Sports Skills and Tactics which stresses the importance of a coach's ability to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of each team member and to place them in suitable situations and roles where they can be successful. The coach must also be informed of the current best practices and competitive strategies in their sport (NASPE, 2006). Next, the seventh domain, Organization and Administration, relates the importance of coaches providing accurate information to the team and to the public regarding the program's goals, policies, and events. The coach's administrative skills are an integral part of establishing team policies and building public trust (NASPE, 2006). Finally, the eighth domain, Evaluation, stresses the need for the coach to make accurate and timely decisions on behalf of the program and the athletes on their team. The coach must provide a systematic evaluation of each player and also evaluate the needs of the program. Careful analysis of program and player evaluation will allow for the program to run smoothly and efficiently (NASPE, 2006).

#### Unique Traditions of Georgia High School Football Teams

The first high schools in Georgia date to the late 1800's and some community football games were played in the 1890s (Danzig, 1956; Nelson, 2011). Organized high school football in Georgia began at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The oldest rivalry

tradition in Georgia high school football was the game played on Thanksgiving Day between Benedictine Military Academy and Savannah High School who can date their first contest to 1903 (ghsfha.org, n.d.; Nelson, 2011). The tradition (no longer in practice) was that the winning team would burn a coffin, sometimes with the effigy of one of the opposing players inside, on Boughton Street in Savannah and both teams and their fans would attend the event. This Thanksgiving Day game took place each year from 1920 until 1959 and was a large social community event (Nelson, 2001). The teams still play every year and it remains one of the fiercest high school football rivalries in the country (Nelson, 2011).

The high school football team with the most wins in the nation is the Valdosta High School Wildcats of Valdosta, Georgia. At the end of their state championship winning 2016 season Valdosta High School had amassed 890 wins (NFHS.org, December 23, 2016). At the team's stadium there is an enclosed walkway that leads from the home team locker room to the field and it is covered by a metal roof. The Valdosta team takes off their helmets and bangs on this roof repeatedly before taking the field.

In his work, *Must Win; A Season of Survival for a Town and its Team* (2012), Drew Jubera describes this unique tradition writing:

The whole jacked-up bunch [the team] gripping their facemasks like nightsticks or bottles for a ballroom brawl, massed at the end of the tunnel the same way Valdosta teams had massed there before games for decades, beating the corrugated metal above their heads as many times as they could - some left both

feet to hit it even harder - in a kind of ecstatic, tribal tribute to all those hallowed 'Cats who'd dented and damaged the roof before them. (p. 5)

Valdosta's pregame tradition sounds like thunder rolling through the stands and is meant to intimidate opposing players, coaches, and fans (Jubera, 2012; Nelson, 2011). The Valdosta High School football program has a long and storied history, rich in tradition and expectations. As of 2015, the Valdosta High School Wildcats have won 23 state championships and six national titles (NFHS.org, n.d.). The townspeople refer to the city of Valdosta as "Winnersville." In 2008, in national voting conducted by ESPN, Valdosta, Georgia, was declared Title Town, USA and presented with a large trophy and much fanfare (Jubera, 2012).

Another south Georgia team with unique tradition is the Cairo High School Syrupmakers from Cairo, Georgia. Available records of the Cairo High School Syrupmakers football team date back to 1922 (ghfha.org, n.d.). Cairo's overall record at the end of the 2015 season was 615-328-37 for a winning percentage of .646%. Since then, the Syrupmakers have won the state championship three times and have garnered sixteen region titles (ghfha.org, n.d.).

Cairo is approximately twenty rural miles from the Florida border and was once known as "syrup city" because of the sugar juice syrup, or molasses, that was made there at the now defunct, Roddenbery's Food Products plant (cairo.gch.schoolinsites.com, n.d.). This is not the corn syrup some would associate with Karo syrup that is made in various places across the globe by the large food products conglomerate, ACH Food Companies, Inc. Karo corn syrup was originally made in 1902 by the Corn Products

Refining Company of New York and Chicago and is not the same as the Roddenbery products that were produced at the plant in Cairo, GA ([www.karosyrup.com](http://www.karosyrup.com), n.d.).

The Cairo High School Syrupmakers were once the Cairo High School Tigers. The origin and date of the name change are somewhat elusive. Sometime in the past, during a severe rainstorm, workers from the Roddenbery's plant across the street from the high school stadium brought long raincoats to the Cairo football players on the sideline. The coats were imprinted with "Roddenbery's Syrup" on the back and the name became synonymous with the football team ([cairo.gch.schoolinsites.com](http://cairo.gch.schoolinsites.com), n.d.).

The actual team mascot or image is a pitcher that the syrup was often poured in for distribution and sale. When the football team scores the tradition at the school is to have a group of students, dressed in overalls and straw hats, stoke a fire at a brick "syrup making house" behind one of the end zones. A loud train like work whistle is sounded and large amounts of steam is emitted from the syrup house.

East Coweta High School and Oconee County High School have similar traditions in that they have a female student who dresses as a Native American princess and rides a horse onto the playing surface and spears the turf at midfield.

In 2002, the writers at *The Athens Banner-Herald* set out to "determine the grandest [high school football] traditions in northeast Georgia" ([OnlineAthens.com](http://OnlineAthens.com), August 18, 2002). Jonathan McGinty, a staff writer covering the area's high school football at the time wrote, "There is no more unique, and grander, tradition in Northeast Georgia than Clarke Central's pre game entrance through the storied pines at Billy Henderson Stadium. It's something that has been practiced since the school first opened



its doors and is one of the more special traditions in high school football”  
(OnlineAthens.com. August 18, 2002).

Clarke Central High School was formed in 1969 with the consolidation of Burney Harris High School and Athens High School. Since that time Clarke-Central has won football state championships in 1977, 1979, and 1985. The Gladiators of Clark Central have been the state runner-up five different times including as recently as 2009 and were declared the mythical National Champion in 1979  
(<http://www.cchsgladiatorfootball.com>, n.d.).

McGinty further offered in the article, “Second place has to go to the Warrior Princess of Oconee County, who gallops across the field to open each contest and often terrorizes the opponents in the far end zone” (OnlineAthens. August 18, 2002). These are just a few of the ceremonial habits of the high school football tradition-rich state of Georgia (Nelson, 2011).

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

A qualitative research design was used for this study for several compelling reasons. Chief among these is that the situation of the individuals in the study are unique, special, and complex (Stake, 1995). A descriptive qualitative case study is particularly suited to this research project in that it is an attempt to focus on the discovery and insight that can be gained from the participants in the context of their ever-changing circumstances and settings (Merriam, 1998). Nick Saban (2007), the head coach of the University of Alabama's football team, is often heard repeating the mantra about his football team that improvement is a process. It is fluid. It is a process because the situation of his team is fluid. Players get injured, players get stronger or faster, players become academically ineligible, or assistant coaches leave to take other positions. A descriptive qualitative case study allows for the fluid exchange of information. It offers the researcher the ability to reinvestigate a line of inquiry if situations change or if that

area becomes more important or more germane to the research questions that are to be answered. (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

Qualitative research allows for the study of phenomena which can be particularly difficult to capture using traditional quantitative methods (Stake, 1995). I wanted to learn what highly successful football coaches do to be effective. I wanted to identify and compile the techniques, philosophies, and theories that these leaders employ to win football games and shape the lives of the young student-athletes they coach. I wanted to discover and describe what these men believe is important to be successful. This examination required a study of the thought processes and the lived experiences that shape this process (Merriam, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I hope to improve high school football coaching and increase the level of professionalism in high school football coaching by using qualitative techniques to capture the essence of each coach's life and philosophies (Maxwell, 2005; Stake 1995).

Moreover, qualitative research emphasizes the researcher's role in the study as an active instrument for data collection (Maxwell, 2005; Seidman, 2006; Stake 1995). The researcher was the key instrument for data collection and dissemination in the study. I capitalized on my lived experience in the area under study and was able to differentiate the unique aspects of each coach's practice more readily and with some expertise (Maxwell, 2005). I attempted to conduct a qualitative case study research project (Gillham, 2001; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 1994; Merriam 1994; Stake, 1995) that answered the overarching question, what makes these coaches successful, and what makes them unique?

## Research Design

### An Interactive and Interpretive Approach

This project is a descriptive case study of two of the most successful high school football coaches in Georgia. Interviews, observations, program literature, and historical documents were used to ascertain to what extent these successful head high school football coaches align their philosophy and practice to Kouzes and Posner (2007) Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership.

The model this qualitative study employed is what Joseph Maxwell (2005) terms an interactive approach. This is a systematic model that allows for the flexibility this study required (Maxwell, 2005; Stake 1995). To ensure the effectiveness of the study, there are five key components to this design that Maxwell (2005) suggests.

First, the study has clearly stated goals that are worth the endeavor (Maxwell, 2005). In this case study project, I attempted to improve an ongoing condition in our educational system, and therefore, the stakeholders should care about the results (Merriam, 1998).

Second, this work has a path outlined in the conceptual framework that helps to direct the intentions of the research moving forward through the study (Maxwell, 2005). I have also included personal experiences while drawing on prior research and findings. I have examined the literature to form a basis for understanding the coaches in the study and the issues they are facing (Maxwell, 2005).

Third, research questions specifically outline what the research would like to produce at the completion of the study (Maxwell, 2005; Stake 1995). Mainly, what are

these winning coaches doing to be successful? Is there some phenomena at work in these coaches' programs that are related to their success, and how do the individual cases relate to one another? These questions are, as Maxwell (2005) states, "the heart or the hub of the model" (p. 5). These questions connect all the other aspects of the model yet allow for flexibility in the design. Maxwell offers a rubber band metaphor meaning that this qualitative design does have flexibility but also constraints, and if the constraints are violated, the study will be ineffective or the rubber band will break (Maxwell, 2005). The research questions were used to formulate the initial interview questions and were also used to identify the areas of inquiry in the field observations (Merriam, 1998). The research questions for the study are:

1. What attributes are shared among the most successful high school football coaches in the state of Georgia?
2. What do these head coaches, assistant coaches, and former players, perceive to be the leadership qualities that are necessary for success as a high school football coach?
3. What unique traditions are present at the schools where these men coach, and how do these traditions assist in their success?

Fourth, I will draw upon time tested methods of data gathering and data interpretation (Maxwell, 2005). These included interviews of participants and follow-up interviews, observation of the participant coaching his team, field observations and field notes, documents and program literature collection and examination, coding interview

responses for themes, and coding field notes and observations for themes (Maxwell 2005; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002; Stake 1995).

The final component of an interactive approach is ensuring the study takes into account validity (Maxwell, 2005). This study was conducted to produce valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner (Merriam, 1998). In an effort to ensure that the conclusions of the study are trustworthy and make sense, this qualitative case study offers in-depth and detailed description of each participant and setting (Merriam, 1998).

#### Research Site Selection

The research sites are the high schools where the successful head high school football coaches are employed. These research sites included the community in which the school is located.

#### Head Coach Participant Selection

The head coach participants were chosen from the records maintained by the Georgia High School Football Historical Association's (GHSFHA) web page at [ghsfha.org](http://ghsfha.org). These active coaches are coaches who have won 200 or more games over their careers (see Appendix D).

All of the active high school head coaches in Georgia with 200 or more wins were contacted and asked to participate in the study. Of the seven school districts and head coaches that were contacted, two agreed to participate in the study. The two participant head coaches in the study are Head Coach Alan Chadwick at The Marist School located in Atlanta, GA and Head Coach Rich McWhorter at Charlton County High School located in Folkston, GA.

The Marist School is a 4A private school with an enrollment of 780 students (grades 9-12) and Charlton County High School is a 1A public school with an enrollment of 461. These classification designations are taken from the records maintained by the Georgia High School Association's (GHSA) web page at [ghsa.net](http://ghsa.net). The Georgia High School Association, headquartered in Thomaston, Georgia, is the entity that governs all public and some private school high school athletics in the state of Georgia. The GHSA classifies schools by student enrollment from 1A through 7A with 7A schools being the largest. The GHSA then divides these schools into geographical regions in order to conduct state playoffs in each individual sport.

Two of the seven classifications are represented in the study and vastly different socio-economic factors are present at the two schools. Typically, the resources at smaller public schools are not the same as they are at larger private schools. Coaches at different sized schools in Georgia face unique challenges because of the disparity in funding, fan base, equipment, facilities, and transportation.

#### Assistant Coach Participant Selection

The assistant coaches were selected for their long tenure with the head coach. I attempted to select the senior coach on the coaching staff who has coached with the head coach for the longest period of time. In each case, I was afforded the opportunity to interview an assistant coach who had actually played for the head coach at their school. At the Marist School I interviewed Assistant Coach Jeff Euart who had played for Head Coach Chadwick and who has coached at the school since 1994. At Charlton County I was able to interview Assistant Coach Norris Woods, Jr. who was a member of the 1999

through 2001 teams at the school and had been coaching there since he graduated from college. This was an effort to select a participant who had witnessed the coach perform with different teams. These longtime assistants, through their experience, were most likely to shed some insight into each coach's core philosophies. I also believed that these coaches were most likely to be forthright in the interviews as they have the most perceived job security of any person on the coaching staff who had been a faithful assistant for a number of years.

#### Former Player Participant Selection

The former player participants were selected because they were former members of the head coach's team and played all four years of high school football under the head coach. These participants were selected based upon the referral of the head coach or assistant coach interviewed for the study. These former team member participants offer a unique perspective, having played for the head coach, and also by witnessing the coach perform as a community member outside of the football team.

The former player from The Marist School was Myles Willis who played football at Marist from 2009-2012. The former player from Charlton County was Mark Smith who played at Charlton County from 1998-2001.

#### Methods of Data Collection

Qualitative research methods were selected for this study because I wanted to discover data that was rich in detail and to establish the context of each participant's experience (Merriam, 1998). Coaching observations, interviews, program literature, and historical records were the primary sources of data. I visited each school's football



facility for two days of in-season practice. Each of these schools, communities, and coaches were described by using demographic and economic data, historical records and archives, interviews, and observations.

Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The use of semi-structured interview protocols guided the conversation with each participant but open-ended questions were employed to help discover emerging themes and commonalities (Seidman, 2006). Questions for the follow-up interviews of the head coaches were derived from the emerging themes from the analysis of the first interviews and from the observations of the interaction of the coach with his team at the practices (Seidman, 2006).

#### Coaching Observations & Program Literature

In an effort to answer Research Questions One & Two, I visited each head coach at his school and began with a tour of the facility. Next, I observed two days of football practice with the team. For each case the goal was to be in the field observing the workings of the participants (Stake, 1995).

In an effort to answer Research Question Three, I procured as much team literature as possible including, but not limited to, practice schedules, itineraries, rosters, game programs, historical documents, and play schematics. This information was used to validate the coach's statements and to help describe any unique traditions that were uncovered during the site visits.

The initial observation instrument was developed directly after the initial interviews with each head coach in an effort to test their assertions of the elements of coaching they value (CES II-HST, 1999). These observations helped to triangulate the

data acquired from the interviews and printed documents and helped to further define the context in which these men work and lead. Observations were compared for commonalities and discrepancies in an ongoing basis throughout the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In an effort to validate or invalidate each head coach's assertions, the observation instruments were slightly different for each participant.

#### Head Coach Interviews

I interviewed the head coach on three separate occasions. The first interview was prearranged and these initial interviews lasted almost an hour (Merriam, 2002). The head coach's time was in great demand and they were on a very tight schedule so an attempt was made to respect their time and keep the interviews under an hour (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These interviews were recorded and transcribed. A semi-structured instrument with open-ended questions designed to align with Kouzes & Posner's Five Principles of Effective Leadership (2007) was used (Appendix A). The initial interview examined the head coach's experience in context. I asked each coach about their life experience up to this point and attempted to ascertain how this experience had shaped their coaching philosophy.

After observing each head coach and staff interact with their team for two days and analyzing the responses to the initial head coach interview, I interviewed the head coach the second time. In these interviews I attempted to clarify some of the themes that emerged in each coach's practice (Merriam, 2002). In these interviews I asked about any issues, themes, or unique phenomena that I noticed during my observations. This second interview was designed to "concentrate on the concrete details of the participants' present

lived experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 18). I inquired about anything that would shed more light on the coaching methods, techniques, or philosophy that I observed during their interaction with the team. I also asked for clarification on any aspect of their coaching experience and practice that still remained ambiguous. I wanted to examine what the daily life of a high school head coach is like and what they actually aim to accomplish and complete each day (Seidman, 2006). I sent each coach the summaries of the interviews through email and asked that they read them over to make sure they were accurate.

Finally, I prearranged a follow-up phone interview after the season and after each coach had time to read over the transcribed interviews. This final interview was conducted over the phone and lasted up to 45 minutes. I developed a follow-up interview instrument (see Appendix G and Appendix H) that confirmed and clarified the themes that emerged from the previous interviews and observations.

#### Assistant Coach Interviews

For both cases, an assistant coach was interviewed one time using a semi-structured interview protocol, and all interviews were tape recorded and transcribed (Appendix B). These interviews were used to assist in answering Research Questions One and Three. I attempted to interview a senior coach on the coaching staff who had coached with the head coach for the longest period of time. The questions were open-ended and based on Kouzes & Posner’s Five Principles of Effective Leadership (2007). The questions were developed to capture the assistant coach’s perception of the head coach. Coach Euart’s interview was 46 minutes long and Coach Norris was interviewed

for 44 minutes. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Merriam, 2002). These interviews helped to reinforce the head coach's assertions and helped to serve in the triangulation of the data.

### Former Player Interviews

For both cases, a former player was interviewed one time using a semi-structured interview protocol and all interviews were recorded and transcribed (Appendix C). Interviews lasted as long as necessary, but out of respect for the community member's time, an attempt was made to keep these interviews under an hour in length (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Merriam, 2002). These interview responses assisted in answering all three research questions. These participants were former members of the head coach's team and played all four years of high school football under the head coach. Questions were developed based on Kouzes & Posner's Five Principles of Effective Leadership (2007) and the research questions. These individuals offered a unique perspective as they have been coached by the participant in the study and have observed the coach negotiate at least one season as an outsider.

### Methods of Analysis

#### Coding of Data

Data analysis and collection was an ongoing and simultaneous process throughout the study (Merriam, 1998). Coding was used to determine emerging themes and commonalities. A review of the transcripts, field notes, and program literature was used

to determine themes that repeatedly occurred during data collection (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Each interview was given identifying notations such as participant name, date, the site where interview was conducted, and the school name. These interviews were transcribed and this record will be kept in a separate file for each individual case along with program literature, field notes, and team history information. Management of the data will encompass a mix of computer and manual organizational techniques.

To place each coach's leadership practices in order of priority, a coding system was used. The coding system denoted each time the head coach mentioned a leadership activity or idea, or there was evidence of one of Kouzes and Posner's (2007) Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership during the entirety of the site visit. This was coded by using the following initials: Model the Way (MW); Inspire a Shared Vision (ISV), Challenge the Process (CP); Enable Others to Act (EOA); and Encourage the Heart (EH). These notations were tallied for each coach and then placed in a matrix to determine the cross-case correlation.

### Single Case Analysis

From the coding and review of the data, a matrix was constructed to identify themes, commonalities, and discrepancies (Merriam, 2002). To answer Research Questions One, Two, and Three, the data was analyzed after each interview and field notes and memos were compiled throughout the study. It is important, as Patton (2002) notes, that each case is given individual care without pigeonholing or categorizing the case. A careful write up of each case is essential before cross-case analysis can begin (Merriam, 2002; Patton 2002). To this end, I wrote up each case as an individual case

after completion of each site visit. I utilized quotes from the interviews to highlight the emerging themes that had been isolated from the matrices.

Validating the data requires that triangulation (Denzin, 1978) occurs by utilizing head coach perspective, assistant coach perspective, former player perspective, field observation notes, and historical program documents. Also, validation was enhanced by sharing the transcripts of the interviews with the participants and having the participants read the transcripts for clarification and accuracy (Maxwell, 2005).

#### Cross-Case Analysis

After the second head coach study was complete, the individual case data had been analyzed, and I had gained some insight into how and why these coaches and others believe they are successful, I began the cross-case analysis (Merriam, 2002; Patton 2002). From the insights gained from the interviews, observations, and documents collected, I attempted to answer the Research Questions. Each coach had a story to tell, and I wanted to capture the story of their experience and compare each coach's story. I also wanted to be able to define the similarities and differences between the two head coach participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The cross-case analysis utilized a qualitative matrix consisting of headings using Kouzes and Posner's (2007) Five Practice of Exemplary Leadership. The themes that had been emphasized in each case were plotted out on the matrix to determine what similarities and differences emerged (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

#### Threats to Credibility

All of the participants have agreed to be included in the study and the school districts have approved my observing practices, meetings, and interviewing their employees. Selecting participant coaches from the two very different classifications in Georgia should allow for valid conclusions about effective coaching across the state (Merriam, 1998). An intentional effort towards triangulation of the data has been implemented to ensure the conclusions are valid and credible (Denzin, 1978). The chief participants in the study are in highly successful football programs with histories of success and job security at their schools. For the most part, my experience with other football coaches over the years is one in which coaches see it as an obligation to share their knowledge with other coaches. I was able to observe practices and workouts and was able to substantiate the claims the coaches made, the techniques they employed, and the philosophies they espoused.

As the chief instrument for data collection and a former football coach and current athletic director, I have come to terms with my own biases and have detailed my personal experiences in Chapter One (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). In this study, as Diener and Crandall (1978) suggest, I made an intentional effort to be as “nonbiased, accurate, and honest in all phases of research as possible” (p.162).

This study also has built-in methodological controls such as prescribed interview protocols and a framework to guide the process (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Lastly, there was a step-by-step process in place in the study that was followed in data collection and categorization (Merriam, 1998).

## CHAPTER IV

### CASE STUDY OF HEAD COACH ALAN CHADWICK, THE MARIST SCHOOL

#### The Setting

The Marist School, located in the neighborhood of Brookhaven, is in northeast Atlanta, Georgia, just inside the Interstate 285 perimeter. In 2015, 50,812 people were living in Brookhaven. A median household income of \$69,277.00 was reported (U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2015). In 2015, the median property value in Brookhaven was \$368,300.00. The three largest racial groups in Brookhaven in 2015 were White, Hispanic, and Black. In 2015, 57.62% of the Brookhaven population were White, 24.19% of the population were Hispanic, .094% were Black (U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2015). Brookhaven is home to Northside Hospital, Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital, and Oglethorpe University

Brookhaven is an affluent neighborhood with expensive homes, several luxury hotels, beautiful office buildings, and heavy rush hour traffic. Marist High School is located in a slight valley along Nancy Creek which separates the middle school practice fields from the varsity playing fields. As I pulled past the first of several playing fields on



my first day at Marist, there was a security officer in a guard booth that stopped me and politely gave me directions to the athletic facilities. The Marist campus's brick buildings and grounds were well maintained and one could easily mistake the setting as a small college campus. The tree-lined walkways, flower-bordered paths, and green lawns were populated by students in uniforms. The girls wore the traditional plaid Catholic school skirts with mainly white blouses while boys wore dress shirts and ties. I learned later that the boys in grades seven through eleven wore a solid blue tie while seniors wore a striped blue and gold tie. Some students wore knit polo shirts with the Marist logo as well.

#### The History of The Marist School

Marist is operated by a Roman Catholic religious order, the Society of Mary or the Marists. The society was founded in 1816 in France and officially sanctioned by the Vatican in 1836 (Reynolds, 2017). The Marists arrived in Atlanta in 1897 and immediately began building Sacred Heart Church. It is still in existence at the V-shaped intersection of Peachtree Center Avenue and Peachtree Street in downtown Atlanta. The church was dedicated in 1898 and is on the National Register of Historic Places (Reynolds, 2017).

In 1901, Father John E. Gunn opened the Marist College on Ivy Street (now Peachtree Center Avenue). The school was initially authorized to confer college degrees in addition to being a secondary school. The college curriculum never fully materialized and the plan to be a college was abandoned in the earliest years of the school (Reynolds, 2017). The school operated on Ivey Street for 61 years until moving to its current location

on Ashford Dunwoody Road. At this time “college” was dropped from the name and the school officially became The Marist School.

For 75 years, The Marist School was an all-male military day school. Training was initially Army based until 1966 when Marist became the first Air Force Junior ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corp) Institute in America. Military training was compulsory until 1974 and was discontinued in 1977 (Reynolds, 2017).

Marist first admitted females in 1976 and today roughly half of the student body is female. From its founding, The Marist School has been open to students of all faiths although roughly 80% of its students are Catholic. The mission of The Marist School is, “to form the whole person in the image of Christ through instruction grounded in religious value, the teachings of the Catholic Church, and the spirit of the society of Mary” (Harhager, 2017).

During the previous GHSA reclassification cycle in 2015, the total current enrollment at The Marist School for grades 9-12 was 793 students (“Georgia High School Association FTE Data Report,” 2015). Of these 793 students, 60% of students, or 476 live outside of the county where the school is located. The Marist School’s out of county enrollment triggers what is known as the GHSA multiplier for The Marist School moving them from AA to AAA. However, Marist petitioned the GHSA during the previous reclassification cycle to “play up” or rather, to be placed in AAAA, to play more competitive teams from the larger classification.

In an article in *Sports Illustrated* in 2005, the Marist School is deemed, “The Little School that Thinks It Can” because Marist petitions the GHSA to play in larger

classifications than their enrollment would place them. The publication ranked the Marist Athletic Program as number 15 in the nation out of 38,000 high schools (Shipnuck, 2005).

### The History of Marist High School Football

The Marist School played an experimental football game without coaches in 1903, then another in 1912. Football officially began at Marist in 1914 under the school's first coach, Joseph W. Bean (Reynolds, 2011). Bean was a retired major league baseball player. He was hired to coach all the sports at Marist in 1903 (Cox, 2012). The Marist football program has had 13 coaches including Bean. The longest tenured coaches have been W. Dean Hargas, who coached the team from 1968 to 1984 and the current coach, Alan Chadwick, who has coached the team since 1985. Marist has won two state championships in football in 1989 and 2003 and has won nine North Georgia titles in 1933, 1934, 1935, 1948, 1980, 1983, 1984, 1987, 1989, and one South Georgia Championship in 1979 (Reynolds, 2011). More notably, Marist has made the state playoffs every year since 1983.

At the end of the 2016 season, Marist's record was 688 wins, 325 losses, and 35 ties. Marist has the fifth most wins of any school in Georgia. During the 2017 season Coach Chadwick surpassed Robert Davis to become second on the list of wins by head coaches in Georgia behind Lincoln County Coach Larry Campbell (see Appendix D).

### Unique Traditions at The Marist School

On the front cover of the 2017 Marist High School Football program is a picture of all the senior football players. The caption at the bottom of the cover reads, "105 Years

of Football.” At Marist, the coaches speak of the Marist long blue line. This is the tradition of winning that is passed down to the new players from the players that have played football at Marist before them. The coaches also speak of the ghosts of Marist football and that the steam off Nancy Creek early in the morning is the ghosts of former players visiting the team. To the players, the long blue line and the ghosts of Marist point to the history and tradition of the teams that have represented Marist since 1903.

The pregame tradition is unique at Marist in that Coach Chadwick insists on eating the team meal at the same restaurant, The Mad Italian, before every game. He also eats the same exact thing, iceberg lettuce salad, and spaghetti with meat sauce, and sits in the same seat (Cox, 2012). This has been the routine for over 30 years. After the meal, before every game, the team assembles in the school chapel for pregame Mass.

The uniforms at Marist are unique in that the blue hats or helmets are unadorned with any decal or logo. The blue hat of a Marist War Eagle is coveted by the football players, and Coach Chadwick will threaten players with taking their “hats” or having a player turn in his helmet. The coaches talked about playing for the blue hat and what the blue hat represents.

The Marist football program does not issue single digit numbers to players. Coach Chadwick has told the team that the numbers one through nine do not exist. He does not like to give out single numbers to players as he believes these numbers are for individuals and that football is a team game taking a united team effort (Cox, 2012).

Contacting the Participants

The security officer was very pleasant and helpful and instructed me that I could find Coach Chadwick in the athletic facility, Centennial Center, which was the last building before getting to the football stadium. I found Coach Chadwick in the athletic offices on the second floor with coach Tommy Marshall, the long-time Marist High School Athletic Director. They both joked with me about the football season, our team was doing well and so were their War Eagles. Both teams, at the time, were undefeated. I had never met Coach Chadwick before, but I had met coach Marshall one time, very briefly, at a recent conference. Coach Marshall and I got reacquainted and we talked about the school year and how the fall sports were progressing. There were several state championship trophies on display in the athletic office and an eye-catching football team picture taken after the team had played another Catholic school from Chicago on a recent trip to Ireland. We joked and laughed together about one of my school's recent victories over a football team that had beaten Marist and eliminated them from the playoffs two years earlier. Coach Marshall's energy and enthusiasm were palpable as he welcomed me to The Marist School.

I must also be clear that at this time the Marist coaches believed our teams might play each other in the playoffs as we were in the same classification and our regions were on the same side of the playoff bracket for the 2017-18 school year. I assured Coach Chadwick at this time that I would not watch the team scrimmage or do any "team drills." I did not want him to think I was there to scout his team and get any information for my school's team that might give my team an advantage. I reassured him that I was there to study his leadership style in context. He said I could watch anything I wanted and

reassured me that I was more than welcome and continued to be very friendly and hospitable. I was very impressed by Coach Chadwick's willingness to be helpful. He completely welcomed me and made sure I had everything I needed as I conducted the site visit. I must also offer that everyone I met at Marist was very eager to help me and was very welcoming and polite.

Coach Chadwick led me through the athletic facility, Centennial Center, to meet Coach Euart. Coach Chadwick informed me that he had arranged for me to interview Coach Euart first and to come and find him when we were done for his interview. Coach Euart met us in the defensive meeting room and the interview was conducted at his desk in that office.

Summary of Interview with Assistant Coach Jef Euart, The Marist School,

2:00 p.m. October 3, 2017

Coach Euart is the defensive coordinator at Marist and has been coaching at the school for 24 seasons since he graduated from college. Although he no longer teaches, he is very dedicated to the team and spends many hours at the school each week during football season and throughout the year. Coach Euart owns his own business but taught for three years until he realized that his Catholic school salary would not be sufficient to raise a family in Atlanta. Coach Euart grew up in Atlanta and attended Christ the King School and The Marist School. Coach Euart is married with three children and he credits Coach Chadwick for this as Coach Chadwick set him and his wife up for their first date. His wife attended Marist and graduated two years before coach Euart. Coach Euart offered that his wife understands what Marist football and the Marist community is all

about and is very supportive of his endeavors during the football season. He stated simply, “she is the best.”

Coach Euart was well spoken, thoughtful, and intelligent. He seemed totally engaged in the process of answering my questions. He is a focused individual who likes to handle tasks and get them done. A couple of the staff members that I spoke with described Coach Euart as a “straight shooter” and “a man of his word.” One coach on the sideline at practice asked me, “Did you talk to Euart? That is one hard-working son of a gun. He is here all the time. He would be a good one to talk to.” I got the sense that the other staff members respected Coach Euart and looked up to him as an expert.

When I asked about Coach Chadwick modeling the behaviors he expects from team members and the coaches he pointed to Coach Chadwick’s work ethic. Euart stated, “Well, you know, his work ethic has always been, just ridiculous, his attention to detail and work ethic I think that is what he models the most.”

When asked about the most important attributes or behaviors a coach needed to possess to be successful, Coach Euart again emphasized the idea of having a strong work ethic. Coach Euart also stated, “Organization, man you better be organized. Coach Chadwick has that as a head coach. His attention to detail I think has made him stand out.”

I asked Coach Euart how Coach Chadwick attempts to inspire a shared vision and goals for the team and he told me that each year the team has a theme or a motto. Coach Euart added that every year at Marist the goal is to win a state championship and that goal has not changed.

Coach Euart offered that Coach Chadwick is very slow to change the way they do things and some things he refuses to change. Coach Euart did note that Coach Chadwick is willing to challenge their process but is very set in his routines. Coach Euart stated, “Coach has evolved with the times but there are some things, you know, if it is not broke, don’t try to fix it. We do run some different spread type things on offense at times, well we get in the shotgun sometimes, you almost have to these days, but the base offense is still the same offense and we are going to be very physical on defense.”

When asked about Coach Chadwick’s willingness to delegate the responsibilities of the football team Coach Euart stated, “He delegates a lot. Probably more than most high school coaches. He lets me run the defense and be totally responsible for it and implementing our game plan at practice.” I asked if Coach Chadwick still calls the plays on offense and Coach Euart stated, “No, he has given that up as well but he has the final say and listens to what is being called. He tries to develop the coaches that are here. That is something he does very well.”

I asked Coach Euart to give me an example of when Coach Chadwick enables others to take ownership of the program. Coach Euart offered, “Well, you know, the team is the senior’s team. Coach [Chadwick] makes that very clear. He expects them to lead the team. He also lets the coaches coach and do their jobs. There has to be some trust there.”

When asked how much Coach Chadwick uses encouragement in the day-to-day operation of the team Coach Euart stated, “Well, he is very positive and encouraging, you



know, but he also lets you know when things need improvement or when a player didn't perform how they have been taught."

I asked Coach Euart about team building and building a sense of community on the team. Coach Euart stated, "Well, you know, that is everything. We have a unique thing here at Marist. There is a spiritual aspect to it. We feel like a family and you play for your brother. You know you play for the blue hat. I think that has helped us more than anything else over the years." Coach Euart also stated, "We bond a lot at camp. We go to camp every year, and the players and coaches bond during that week. They get there and everybody shaves their heads, so they do that together. So, that week is important."

Coach Euart also stated, when asked about any unique traditions at the school, "We have a routine and that does not change. I don't know if you would call it a tradition. We eat the pregame meal together at the same restaurant, geesh, for so long now, well ever since I can remember, since before I went here." In addition, Coach Euart offered, "We go to mass. We have a team mass before every game. It lets the guys focus, it's some quiet time. They are together. So, those are some things that are traditions that happen as our routine."

At the closing of the interview, I asked Coach Euart why he thought Coach Chadwick was able to win so many games over the years. Coach Euart stated, "His work ethic, for sure, you know, is something that has raised the standard here. His attention to detail and the little things that matter." Coach Euart added, "And he has had some really good assistant coaches over the years. He developed them, they have been loyal, and there is some consistency." Euart went on to add, "Our kids, the type of character kids we

get here, their dedication and willingness to sacrifice for the good of the team, where it is not about the individual. That has helped us be successful for sure.”

Summary of Interview with Head Coach Alan Chadwick, The Marist School,

2:40 p.m. October 3, 2017

Coach Chadwick was on a golf cart on the field of the Hughes-Spalding Memorial Stadium. It was unseasonably hot on the field and the artificial playing turf was reflecting the afternoon sun. Chadwick is tall, and thin and still in good physical shape. Coach Euart said sometimes we could find him on the balcony of the athletic facility riding a stationary bike that has a view of the field. Coach Euart added, “He likes to go out there and get on the bike and it is quiet and he can think about the game or the game plan, kinda give him some time away to reflect.” Coach Chadwick motioned for me to get in the cart and he pulled down to the backstretch of the track and stopped the cart at an angle where he could keep an eye on a Physical Education class that was being conducted on the field.

Coach Chadwick grew up in Decatur, Georgia, an eastern suburb of Atlanta. He offered about his childhood, “I wanted to play football and baseball like my older brothers. They were really good. They both went on and played at Tennessee. So I was kind of born into it with my brothers.” He was an all-state quarterback for Coach Franklin Brooks while playing for the Decatur High School Bulldogs and graduated in 1969. He signed to play football for The University of Georgia but left after a year to attend East Tennessee State University. At East Tennessee, in 1973, he led the Ohio Valley Conference in passing and was named the conference Offensive Player of the Year.

Coach Chadwick stated, about his time at East Tennessee, “People say all we [Marist] do is run the ball and that I don’t like to pass. Shoot, I was a passing quarterback back before people were throwing the ball all over the place.”

Chadwick was drafted by the Chicago Bears in the eighth round of the 1974 draft, but never played a full season in the NFL. Chadwick stated, “I knew I wanted to coach so I got a GA (Graduate Assistant) position back at East Tennessee and worked on my masters in Phys. Ed. (Physical Education).” Then coach Chadwick asked me, “Do you know the story of how I got this job?” I did not so I asked him to explain it to me. Chadwick explained, “Well, supposedly there was a card game and my dad won and the bet was that if my dad won the hand Coach Hargis, this is Dean Hargis who was the coach here at Marist at the time, he would have to hire me. This was 1976. I think my dad said, ‘You have to hire my son.’ So I got the job through a card game. He hired me as an assistant coach and I became the head coach in 1985.” Chadwick added, “I fell in love with the school. I knew I didn’t want to leave. It was such a special place, I wanted my kids to have the opportunity to go here.” Coach Chadwick is married to his wife Lisa and the couple have two daughters who both attended Marist.

I asked Coach Chadwick about the behaviors he tries to model for his coaches and players and he stated, “Well, if you have a good work ethic and you have a passion for what you are doing you are going to set the tone for others. I try to pay attention to detail. I like things orderly and organized. I believe if you can stay organized and orderly and limit the distractions you can have a chance to be successful.”

When asked about how he tries to inspire a shared vision for his coaches and team Coach Chadwick offered, “Well good teams, for them, the season starts at week eleven. Not that the other games are not important but we are playing for the playoffs. That is our expectation and the players know that and the coaches know it. More than anything we want to be a team and play for each other. That is the vision if there is a vision.”

When asked about his willingness to challenge the process or change the way they do things Coach Chadwick explained, “We have changed. We have had to over the years. The new rules are good. The concussion rules and the safety rules. We have the protective shells over the helmets of our guys who are in the trenches all day. We get in the shotgun some now.” Coach Chadwick added, “Some things we do not change or won’t change. You are going to see our bone drill today.” Marist follows the same practice plan every week and it does not change. Coach Chadwick offers, “We have been doing bone drill the same way forever. We have fifteen or twenty scripted plays we will run as fast as we can run them with the best on the best. The first team offense against as much of the first team defense as we can.”

I asked Coach Chadwick how much he delegates in the operation of the football program. Chadwick stated, “Probably more than most high school coaches. I have good coaches. Most of them went to school here and played here so there is a trust there.” Coach Chadwick added, “These men are good men. They are good family oriented coaches. I let them do their job. Coach Euart totally runs the defense. I don’t really get involved. They know what to do, what we expect.”

When asked how he enables others to act or take ownership of the program Coach Chadwick offered, “Well it is the senior’s team. They know that. They know they have to lead by example. I have been fortunate here to have smart kids who are willing to sacrifice for the team.”

I asked Coach Chadwick how much he uses encouragement in his coaching and he stated, “Well that is what you do, all the time, but you also have to use correction. We are correcting and teaching more than anything.”

When asked about the importance of team building and building a sense of community, Coach Chadwick responded, “It is the number one priority. That is what it is all about isn’t it?”

I asked Coach Chadwick if he could point out any unique traditions present here at Marist that may have contributed to his success and he offered, “Well, we do the Iron War Eagle, our weight room and conditioning program. We have the Long Blue Line. There is a tradition here where people who played come back and want to see a game on Friday night.” Chadwick added, “Our pregame has been the same ever since I got here. We eat at the same restaurant every game and we have Mass before every game.”

Finally, I asked Coach Chadwick why he believes he has been able to win so many games. He stated, “I have had smart players and great assistant coaches. I mean great people. They have been willing to sacrifice for each other and make a commitment to fight for each other.” Coach Chadwick added, “We have to be physical. We don’t have the most talent. Our kids have to work hard and believe in the process. The kids we get

are who we get. We have to develop them and give them a system where they can be successful.”

Coach Chadwick also explained that he has a supportive administration and that athletics were a part of the educational experience at Marist. He also stated that the academic rigors and expectations of the school were so high that many nights his daughters would be up until early morning studying or completing homework or projects. Coach Chadwick stated, “We allow 780 students in grades nine to twelve and they have to get accepted to get in. It is difficult to get in academically in seventh grade. The administration will not ever lower the academic standards. Our students who play sports, they play two or three sports. That is what is expected here.”

Coach Chadwick then offered that he was scheduled to fly to Los Angeles over the weekend and watch the Los Angeles Rams play an NFL football game. It was a “bye week” or “open week” for Marist, meaning they did not have a game that weekend. He noted, “McVay played for me here. Played quarterback on the 2003 team. I am excited to go. He got us tickets. So, that is pretty neat.” Chadwick was speaking about Sean McVay, the youngest head coach in NFL history, who took the reins of the Los Angeles Rams earlier that year at the age of 31.

McVay is a legend at Marist. He was the first and only player at the school to rush and pass for over 1,000 yards in back-to-back seasons. He quarterbacked the team to their last state championship in 2003 and played the second half of the game with a broken foot. McVay edged out Calvin Johnson, also known as “Megatron,” a standout 6’6” wide receiver at Sandy Creek High School, as the Georgia AAAA Offensive Player of the

Year in 2003 (Cox, 2012). McVay went on to play for Miami of Ohio and later became an assistant coach for John Gruden on the 2008 Tampa Bay Buccaneer's staff. McVay eventually got hired with the Washington Redskins as a tight ends coach and rose through the ranks to become the Offensive Coordinator. In January 2017, McVay was hired by the Rams as their head coach making him the youngest head coach in modern history in the NFL.

Summary of Interview with Former Marist Player, Myles Willis, via Phone Call,  
March 13, 2018

Myles Willis entered the Marist School in the ninth grade. He was made to complete an entrance examination and pass the rigorous academic requirements to be able to enroll in the school. Myles is from Conyers, Georgia and attended Memorial Middle School in Conyers for seventh and eighth grades. Myles was a standout athlete in middle school, competing on a travel football team, The North Henry Tigers. Myles attended the Alan Chadwick Football Camp during the summers of his middle school years where he became exposed to The Marist School, its football program, and the school's coaches. His parents wanted Myles to have an excellent academic and athletic experience in high school, so despite the financial burden and travel distance, decided to enroll Myles in The Marist School.

Myles played quarterback at Marist and was the focal point of the War Eagles' offensive attack. He currently holds the record at Marist for most rushes in a single

season at 221 attempts. Myles led his team to a Region Championship in 2013 and to the state semifinal game where they lost to Carrollton High School, 46-44 (Marist War Eagle Football Program, 2017). After high school, Myles earned a football scholarship to Boston College where he played for four years as a running back and kick returner. At the time of the interview Myles was 22 years old and had graduated from Boston College. He was invited to the NFL's Atlanta Falcons mini-camp the previous summer but did not make the team. He is currently a project engineer for Suffolk Construction Company and lives in Brookline, Massachusetts. Myles visits Marists as often as he is able and attended two games this previous season so he could speak with the team and coaches and support his former school.

I asked Myles how Coach Chadwick models the behaviors he expects from his players and coaches and Myles said that Coach Chadwick was always consistent and fair and never showed favoritism to a talented player. Myles stated, “. . . Marist football kind of runs on a professional basis. He doesn't bend the rules for anyone. Often times in high school there is a talented kid and they can kind of jump through and cut through all the traditions and expectations.” Myles said that most of his teammates from his travel team, who attended other high schools, were playing varsity football as freshmen. At Marist, Coach Chadwick insists that all freshmen, no matter how talented they are, play freshman football with their ninth grade cohorts. Myles offered, “I played on the ninth grade team because everyone starts off on ninth grade. He felt it was important to build a good relationship with the people you were close to [in your own grade] because those were the guys you were going to be with for the next four years.” Myles said that because of



this experience, he still values the relationships he built with his Marist teammates and still remains in contact with his friends from the football team.

I asked Myles what he thought were the attributes that a winning coach needs to possess and he said that a coach needs to treat the team like a family and build a family-like atmosphere. Myles said that Coach Chadwick was able to make you feel like you were part of that family and that he [Coach Chadwick] had some core philosophies about football that he was not going to deviate from. Myles stated, “He wants Marist football to have a strong running game and play great defense and take advantage of the passing game when it is available. That consistency is fair and fairness is what players really love the most.”

I asked Myles to what extent he thought Coach Chadwick tried to inspire a shared vision among the team and Myles offered, “I mean every year we are fighting for a state championship. With those expectations laid out clearly at the beginning of training camp every year you know what you are fighting for.” Myles related that the goals at Marist start being talked about by the middle school players. Although he didn’t enroll at Marist until his freshman year, Myles remembered the seventh grade players talking about their goals and aspirations as varsity players. Myles stated, “It starts in seventh grade. The seventh graders are talking about when they get to be seniors, they are going to win state. So it’s really there all the time.”

I asked Myles if he ever saw Coach Chadwick change what they were doing or to challenge the process and he stated, “He is definitely slow to do it, which is probably good at a Catholic school, which is slow to change, but he is not oblivious to different

opportunities that may be available.” Myles gave an example from when he played for Coach Chadwick stating, “. . . When I was there we had a really tall tight end who was really athletic and he [Coach Chadwick] knew we need to take advantage of this mismatch. My senior year we threw a lot more than in previous years.”

When asked if Coach Chadwick uses encouragement or if he tries to encourage the heart, Myles offered that Coach Chadwick knew his players and knew how to motivate them. Myles said, “He knows his players. He has high expectations. He knows what guys need a push. He knows what guys need to be ripped at verbally to get them going.”

I asked Myles if he thought that team building was emphasized at Marist and he responded, “Oh, that was huge. That was part of the reason why he [Coach Chadwick] made sure all freshmen play freshman football. That is your class. You want to get close to those guys. . . He did a great job with team building.”

Myles talked about some of the traditions that he remembered during his time at Marist and he related an experience he recalled when the team needed to travel to play an opponent. Myles stated:

Oh, definitely. I remember almost all of them [traditions]. We had one unique tradition where we would, after a game whether we won or lost, when we turned down Ashford-Dunwoody Road we would have a moment of silence for all the guys that played at Marist and I don't know, for the guys who left it all out there on the field. Then when we hit the second speed bump going into the school we would sing the alma mater. It's things like that that you remember that bond you together. Truthfully, those are the things that kind of made my high school experience. I don't particularly remember any stats or playoff games or anything, but I remember those things. Those things are the things when I call my friends we talk about all the time.

I asked Myles about the tradition of the long blue line and what that meant to him. Myles stated, “The long blue line really is like a fraternity. It’s everyone who ever put on that plain blue helmet, that plain blue helmet with the gray face mask. That will never change.” Myles expounded on this idea stating, “. . . We [former Marist players] all know the traditions of Marist football are not going to change and we can all identify and relate to one another. It really is an exceptional thing to be a part of.”

I also asked Myles about the idea of the plain blue hat or playing for the blue hat (helmet) of the Marist War Eagles and he said that the hat is more of a symbol to the players not to be flashy. Myles alluded that the plainness of the hat reminds players that it is going to take hard work and dedication to achieve their goals and it is not about glamour or notoriety. Myles stated, “Just that plain blue hat we kind of leave it there, as simple as it is. You put that blue hat on you don’t make it more than what it is. It is the same blue hat that other guys wore before you.”

Finally, I asked Myles why he thought Coach Chadwick was able to win so many games as a head high school football coach and Myles related that Coach Chadwick had built a culture of success with high expectations. Myles said that he could appreciate this culture from his experiences at Boston College where he came into the program with a new head coach and had to help establish a culture of high expectations, dedication, and hard work. Myles offered, “. . . When I was at Marist, I was part of when Coach Chadwick won his 300<sup>th</sup> game. We knew the traditions and culture. It kind of allowed you to play out your mind in a way.” Myles explained that the players at Marist were motivated to

live up to the tradition of the program and this made them perform at a level that was higher than their natural abilities. Myles stated:

You can have a guy, an average football player who doesn't have the talent to go D1, but he's making all these crazy plays against all these D1 athletes because he's living it. He's not playing to his ability. He's playing for the long blue line. Coach Perez would always say the ghosts of Marist past. He's playing for all those guys, those spirits that surrounded that program, that kind of make you make plays that you otherwise never thought you would be able to make. I think it's the tradition and the prestige of the Marist program that kind of carries it a long way, along with Coach Chadwick's consistency and high expectations that he expects us all to live up to.

Myles wanted to add that when he thought about his time at Marist he did not remember individual accomplishments, statistics, or even the games his team won or lost. Myles said he thought more about the friends he made and the relationships he built through the shared experiences and traditions of the football program. Myles offered, "When I think about Marist I think about all my friends, not even guys that I played with, guys from before, like on the 2003 state championship team. In a way, it's friendship for life and it's an awesome experience."

Field Observations Day One, The Marist School Football Practice, Tuesday, October 3, 2017 4:00 p.m.

Practice at Marist every day begins with academic period which allows student-athletes to work on assignments or study as needed. The team does not get on the field until about 3:50 p.m. on normal school days. The varsity players intermittently came out of the athletic facility that is adjacent to the stadium and each player went to a designated area on the field to their position group. The players were all dressed in white practice pants and blue mesh practice jerseys with their designated numbers in white on each

jersey. The offensive linemen were with a coach going through individual drills but all the other groups were being led by the players with no coach present. These player led groups stretched and conducted drills for ten minutes of what Coach Chadwick calls pre practice. Then, Coach Euart came out and the team lined up under the goal post for a team dynamic stretch and warm-up period.

Team practice began when a coach threw the ball in the air and when he caught it the team yelled something in unison. I could not make out what they said but later I learned that they screamed: “war damn eagle” to begin each practice.

The bone drill began in earnest. The defensive players were given gold mesh vests to distinguish them from the offense and the scripted 15 plays began. Coaches were yelling at the offensive linemen trying to get their angles of attack corrected and one coach was instructing the outside linebacker in taking the quarterback on the option pitch. I was sitting on the bench on the sideline so I could hear what each coach was instructing their players to do. What struck me as I watched this drill was that there were few players on the sideline watching. I realized that only varsity players were at this practice. The junior varsity, freshmen, seventh, and eighth grade team practiced on separate fields. Coach Chadwick had told me they had 38 seniors. I counted 54 players on the field for varsity practice. In my experience, thirty-eight seniors on a AAAA football team in Georgia is roughly double what is normal. In the 2017 Marist Football program, there were only two sophomores on the varsity roster.

Marist runs a traditional triple option backfield concept on offense. This full-contact bone drill is the basis of their offensive scheme. There is an A back that lines up

directly behind the quarterback and then two wings lined up on the outside of the down linemen on the right and left side of the line. The offense has some wing T concepts as well. Practice moved at a fast pace and players ran from one drill to the next. Coach Chadwick had told me earlier in the day, “We want to hold the ball on offense and shorten the game. It frustrates other teams when they can’t get the ball. We want to be physical on both sides of the ball and very physical on defense.”

The next period was special teams where the team practiced kickoff returns. This was followed by a break period. The next period was of defensive installation of the scheme they were working on for their upcoming opponent. Then there were group drills. At the end of practice there was a conditioning period and then Coach Chadwick had the team huddle up for announcements. There was not much yelling and screaming, but there was a good deal of humor and joking with the players and coaches. The team seemed to be enduring the long practice, but having fun. The team’s attitude was jovial, and there was a general sense that the players enjoyed practice and respected the coaches. It should be noted that the team was undefeated at this point in the season at 6-0.

Field Observation Day Two, The Marist School, Wednesday, October 4, 2017, 1:00 p.m.

I had arranged an appointment with the librarian at The Marist School in an effort to acquire some history of the school and football program. After checking in at the front office, I was led to the library by a student and the librarian put me in contact with Mr. Richard Reynolds who had graduated from the Marist School in 1952 and was the unofficial school historian. Mr. Reynolds was an attorney in Atlanta and graciously sent

me articles and pages from old football programs. Several of the articles, on the history of the school and the football program, he had written himself.

It was parent-teacher conference day at The Marist School, so students were released early and practice would begin earlier than usual. At 3:00 p.m. I positioned myself on the home side stands as the players began arriving. They were in full pads with white pants and blue mesh practice jerseys. I noticed that the player's numbers matched their roster numbers and their numbers were on the back of their helmets, another reminder of the attention to detail Coach Chadwick stresses.

On this day, all the players in the wide receivers group were required to run two laps around the field. I could not determine if this was standard practice or if this was for some transgression. One player, Wesley, (pseudonym) was stalling and not wanting to run his laps. The other players began haranguing this individual with good-natured shouts of, "Run your laps Wesley," or "Laps Wesley," or "It's not about you Wesley!" Coach Euart appeared when he heard the commotion and asked, "Has Wesley not run his laps yet?" In unison, several in the group chanted, "Noooo!" Coach Euart blew his whistle and said, "Wesley. Laps. Now." Wesley ran his laps to the catcalls and jibes of his teammates. This was all in good fun and good humor. The players were holding each other accountable. One thing struck me as profound and that is when one of the players yelled, "it's not about you Wesley." It seems that this player was stating that running the laps and doing what the coaches instructed was bigger than one person. It was about the team, not an individual.

There are two signs hanging on the fence at the Marist field. One sign reads, “We Believe!” The other sign reads, “War Eagle Fever is in the Air.” This sign alludes to the fact that this season Marist is actually attempting to install pass plays as they have a capable quarterback and a few talented receivers. Today, pre-practice was even looser than yesterday. There were no coaches as the groups went through their drills. The drills were entirely player led.

At 3:20 the team was lined up under the goal post in their lines for their dynamic stretch. Team practice today began with special teams executing extra points. Marist uses what some coaches term a “swinging gate” while others call it “polecat” for their extra point plays. This is when the center and quarterback line up over the ball in the shotgun and the rest of the team is lined up to the far side (usually left side) of the field. The team ran several plays out of this formation and kicked extra points when traditionally lined up in kicking formation.

This period was followed by the bone drill and the rest of practice followed the same script of defensive install, followed by a break, followed by an offensive install, individual skill work, a break, then various periods (outlined in the case study), with conditioning and team announcements at the end. There was not any yelling or screaming at these practices and the players seemed to be having fun with one another. Coach Chadwick had stated, “I like the chemistry on this team. The kids have fun and enjoy being around one another. That means a lot during a long season.” There seems to be a high level of respect by the players for Coach Chadwick and the other coaches. Also, one gets the sense that the players had good relationships and were very familiar with one



another. Perhaps this is due to the fact that most of these boys had been playing on the same team since they were in seventh grade. That is six years of playing football together on the same team.

Summary of Follow Up Phone Interview with Head Coach Alan Chadwick, The Marist School, March 3, 2018, 11:33 a.m.

I spoke with Coach Chadwick a few months after the season. His team went undefeated until they got the state championship game where they lost to Blessed Trinity 17-6. Marist had defeated Blessed Trinity earlier in the season 25-24. The state championship game was scheduled to be played in the newly opened Mercedes-Benz Stadium in downtown Atlanta on December 8<sup>th</sup>, but was postponed due to a winter storm. The game was rescheduled to be played at The Marist School the following week. This was the first time in Georgia history that two Catholic schools would meet for a state championship game.

I wanted to clarify and confirm some of the themes that emerged during the site visit to Marist so I asked Coach Chadwick about building team unity and what specific things they do at Marist to bond the team together. Coach Chadwick stated:

Well that's a tough question because so much of that just kind of comes naturally. I think one of the things that aids us in our program is that we start them, the guys, in the seventh grade. And then we try to keep them together within their grade all the way through the program. So they are on the seventh-grade team together, eighth-grade team together, ninth grade, JV, and then varsity. So they're pretty much staying within their group all the way through with a few exceptions here and there. We have a couple sophomores we might pull up, that sort of thing. And so I think they develop a deep bond, a closeness, a togetherness with their

classmates and teammates in that way. I think also Marist fosters that a great deal. In that there are so many class activities that they have. There are functions, there are retreats, there are dinners, and there are dances. There are separate dances for different classes. Just a lot a different social things like that. So they get a real strong bond with their classmates that way. I can say that within the football program itself, you know, we just talk about team, and team chemistry and it's so important. We go off to camp our first week of practice and that is another major factor for us. There is no distractions, there is a week of bonding. It's bust ass and get after it and working them real hard and try to kind of break 'em down and so you can build them back up through hard work. So I think they develop a bond, a closeness, a chemistry at camp as well.

I asked Coach about the spiritual nature of The Marist School and if he believed if the team attending mass together helped forge this bond as well and he added, "I'm not sure how much they are listening to the homily when the priest is up there. It's a good way to get 'em off and get 'em quiet. It's kind of a tradition and a uniqueness that's part of Marist, which a lot of other schools don't have."

Coach Chadwick has never issued single digit numbers to players and so I asked him about this practice and the rationale behind it. He explained that it was a difficult practice to continue because of the number of participants on the team and they have to be careful who is on the field because they use duplicate numbers. He stated, "We felt like it doesn't single out any one player. It's part of being a teammate. You have two numbers on your chest, one for you and one for the guy next to you."

Coach Chadwick emphasized hard work from the coaches and the players and brought up having a strong work ethic several times during our conversations. I asked Coach Chadwick how important it was for his players and coaches to have a strong work ethic and he stated:

It's just a huge, huge, part of it. If the kids aren't committed, if they're not all in, then you are never going to reach your full potential. And that is true as a team

and that's true individually. And that's part of football and what is so great about it. So few of these kids can just show up and play. They have to prepare themselves for a tough, hard, long, physical season. And these kids are young and they are developing and it's so important that their work ethic is there so they can develop themselves physically. They need to get bigger, get faster, get stronger, in order to put themselves in a position to be successful and to keep from getting injured. Some kids come in there and don't do anything and are not in good enough physical shape, and they're not ready to handle the physicality of it, or even the conditioning part of it. They end up getting injured early and miss time and actually don't develop and don't contribute to the team because they didn't come in prepared well enough.

Both Coach Euart and Coach Chadwick talked about the physical nature of the Marist scheme on offense and defense, so I asked Coach Chadwick why he thought being more physical than your opponent was important and he responded, "When you are playing against people who have better talent and better athletes, we feel like that physicality, and that toughness, and that aggressiveness, gives us a better advantage." I observed two very physical practices at Marist where the ball carrier was tackled to the ground and plays were run "live" (at full speed with full contact). In my experience, this type of practice during the season, is no longer typical. Coach Chadwick explained his methods by stating, "Of course the rules have changed and it [full contact practice] has limited that but we still feel we have to do it as much as we possibly can. You know, as much as the rules will allow us to do, we need to hit and go full speed to the ground pretty much all the time."

Coach Chadwick seemed very reluctant to change or to challenge the process of the way they do things in the Marist football program. However, he described to me several instances where he tried to change something and the student-athletes or the alumni rejected it. He said that he tried to change the plain blue helmets and the players on the team told him not to do it. I asked him about his wishbone running attack offensive

system that has been in place since 1976 and if he ever was going to change it. Coach Chadwick offered, “Well, we did change a little bit this year, actually a good bit with our quarterback. The quarterback we had, and of course two great receivers, we knew we had to try to get it out to them.” I asked Coach Chadwick why he thought this type of offense worked for his football program and he added, “Well, we generally don’t have the same type of athletes we are playing against. I feel like personally if you can run the football and you can stop the run, you are going to win the majority of your football games.” Then Coach Chadwick told me about an incident at Marist that happened while they were interviewing for coaches and had named the interim head coach until they could find someone:

They were trying to find a head coach. They interviewed different people and had it open and I was just going crazy because I wanted the job. They didn’t just jump off the bridge to give it to me. So, they named me interim coach. But, in the meantime, we had kids that went up to the front office, because they knew they were interviewing other people. So we had players who went up to the main office and sat down with our principal and headmaster at the time and they said, ‘we don’t care who you hire, just don’t get rid of the wishbone.’ They believed in it that much. They hung their hat on it so much. It was a part of their culture. It’s a part of Marist culture. They have been doing it all these years. I have been there 42 years and they were doing it two years before I got there so 44 years and have been successful. I think we didn’t make the playoffs one time in all those years. So that’s pretty powerful when the kids believe in it that much.

Coach Chadwick believes that his team needs to follow a prescribed and expected routine. I asked him about the importance of being organized and following a routine and he offered, “It’s just the way I am. Discipline. You know I like things in order. I like things neat. I feel the same way about our preparation and our routine. It drives me crazy when our schedule gets off.” Coach Chadwick also believes that a coach needs to have a plan for every practice and that predictability and routine allows the team to focus by

removing unwanted distractions. Coach Chadwick explained, “They know day in and day out what the schedule is going to be and we are not going to vary that. It lends itself to a routine for preparation and organization.”

One of the mottos at Marist is, “We play for the blue hat.” Coach Chadwick described how the football players derive meaning from the plainness of the helmets at Marist. He explained that the blue hat symbolizes the no frills, workman-like attitude of the team. Coach Chadwick offered, “It’s a part of our culture with our kids that they like just putting on the blue plain hat with no emblems, no designs, no stripes.”

Another Marist tradition is the “long blue line.” I asked Coach Chadwick to clarify what the “long blue line” meant to him and if he could elaborate if these traditions assisted in their success at Marist. Coach Chadwick stated:

That just is all those players who have come through the program through all those years. That is being a part of that blue hat mentality. That work ethic that the kids have come through and spent their time on the practice field and the dedication in the weight room. And all those things, the conditioning in the stadium, the summer passing leagues and workouts, the hog heavens, all those sorts of things. It’s a rite of passage. It’s the long blue line like at Georgia they have got commit to the “G” and all that kinda stuff. It’s part of the culture that we have and we play upon that as much as we can.

Lastly, I asked Coach Chadwick if he had any advice or any wisdom that he would pass on to a new high school head coach in Georgia and he offered, “First of all you better surround yourself with some great coaches. I will be the first to tell you I certainly don’t do this all by myself. I’ve got fantastic assistant coaches that know their job . . . I let them coach and do their job.” Coach Chadwick also suggested that a person who aspires to be a head high school football coach in Georgia needs to make sure they have their own identity and stick to a plan. He also offered that a new coach needs to

make sure that their team practices and masters the fundamentals of the game. Coach Chadwick stated, “I think a lot of young coaches try to emulate what they see on Saturday and Sunday and be all fancy dancy instead of just block and tackle, block and tackle. Fundamentals.”

#### Single Case Analysis of Head Coach Alan Chadwick, The Marist School

Through the use of interview data, historical program literature, and field observations the themes that emerge, in order of priority for Coach Alan Chadwick’s leadership practice, are:

##### Building a Sense of Team Unity through Relationships and Team Activities

Coach Chadwick spoke repeatedly of the relationships he has with his former players. He spoke often of the importance of the relationships that the assistant coaches build with players and the team members build with each other. He stressed that these relationships are what is important and what the players will remember about their experience at Marist, not the wins and losses. Coach Chadwick specifically stressed the importance of having players making a commitment to one another and a commitment to the coaches to play and practice for the good of the team. Coach Chadwick stated, “If we have had success it is because we have smart players who are willing to sacrifice and play for each other.”

The camp experience is also a catalyst for much of the bonding that takes place on the team. The Marist football program takes their junior varsity and varsity football players to Riverside Military Academy for a week before every season. The team and coaches endure grueling practices and stay in the dormitories. They eat all their meals

together and take part in team activities. The enduring of this physically challenging week bonds the team members through shared trials and experiences. Coach Chadwick said about the week at camp, “We go off to camp our first week of practice and that is another major factor for us. There is no distractions, there is a week of bonding.” While Coach Euart offered, “We go to camp every year and the players and coaches bond during that week. They get there and everybody shaves their heads so they do that together. So, that week is important.”

There is a spiritual aspect to the family atmosphere at Marist that seems to assist in developing life-long friendships and loyalty. The majority of the coaching staff are former Marist players. On the golf cart that day at Marist Coach Chadwick stated, “Teamwork, being a team, it’s what it’s all about isn’t it?” The fact that Chadwick does not issue single digit numbers as he views them as too individualistic offers further evidence of the emphasis on team unity and unselfishness.

Myles Willis, the former player who was interviewed for the study, said that he didn’t even really remember the wins and losses during his playing career. Instead, he remembered the bonds of friendship and shared experiences during his time at Marist. This esprit de corps is at the heart of what makes the Marist football program successful. The players place importance on being a part of the team and giving a maximum amount of effort for their teammates. This unselfishness is the most important part of the team culture at Marist. It was evident in all the interviews and was strikingly apparent among the team members at practice. The players jokingly admonished another player for not

running his laps before practice but it was very clear that his lack of effort, or trying to take a shortcut, was looked upon with disdain from his fellow teammates.

#### A Strong Work Ethic Exemplified from the Head Coach and Expected of Others

Coach Euart and Coach Chadwick repeatedly mentioned having a strong work ethic or working hard as a cornerstone of the football program's success at Marist. This dedication and work ethic was consistently emphasized at practice as well to the players.

Coach Chadwick said that if a person has a passion for something and is willing to work, that there are no bounds to what he can achieve. I observed Coach Chadwick studying film, setting up the practice field, meeting with his coaches to plan practice, organizing equipment, and performing various duties throughout the site visit.

I observed two of the most physically demanding and intense practices I have ever seen as a football player or coach during my two days at Marist. The team seemed to relish in the brutality of the practices and enjoyed the intense physical demand of the drills with a sense of comradery and humor. In my experience, this culture is very rare on football teams and explains why Marist has enjoyed such success under Coach Chadwick's leadership. He has built a culture where hard work is embraced and the stakeholders hold each other accountable for their effort.

#### An Emphasis on Playing a Physical Style of Football within a Standard System

The physical nature of Coach Chadwick's philosophy is exemplified in the "bone drill" every day at practice. He calls every Tuesday "Bloody Tuesday" because of the nature of the contact that is required of the players. He believes that the program is run on



the intangibles of character, resilience, heart, physicality, and determination (Cox, 2012). He has run the same base offense, with few adaptations, since 1976.

Coach Chadwick believes his team needs to tackle to the ground and engage in full contact as much as the rules allow. Both Coach Euart and Coach Chadwick believe that because their teams may lack some of the speed of their competition, they need to play a more physical brand of football and win the battle in the trenches, between the tackles. Practices at Marist are intense and consistent. The Monday through Wednesday practice schedule has been the same at Marist since Chadwick's arrival and follows this basic plan:

- Pre-practice (player led warm up by position)
- Stretching (dynamic stretching in lines as a team)
- Bone Drill (15-20 basic offensive plays run at a rapid pace)
- Special Team Period
- Water Break
- Fundamentals (JV Offense/Varsity Defense)
- Group Drills by Position
- Team Drills (Scout Team Offence vs. Varsity Defense)
- Water Break
- Fundamentals (Varsity Offense/JV Defense)
- Group Drills by Position
- Team Drills (Varsity Offense vs. Scout Team Defense)
- Water Break
- Team Drills
- Conditioning
- Team Announcements

Monday and Tuesday practices are very physical, with full contact. On Wednesdays, the team engages in some type of intense conditioning component. They often run "gassers." Gassers are sprints from sideline to sideline where the team must run to the sideline, touch it, and run back. An American football field is a little over 53 yards wide so these are essentially 107-yard sprints. I observed the team perform ten gassers at

the end of practice on a Wednesday. The players are broken into groups of linemen and skilled position players and lined up the length of the field. The groups take turns running the gassers to give each group a break in between. It is was very warm on the turf that Wednesday at Marist and the gassers were intense.

Being in great physical shape is a priority at Marist. Their strength and conditioning program entails intense off-season workouts and strength maintenance workouts during the season. The Marist football program is in a unique situation in that the rigorous academic schedule that the football players must take does not allow for a period of weight training during the school day. The weight training of Marist student-athletes, for the most part, takes place outside of the school day. This weight training exemplifies the commitment to hard work and dedication of the football players in that all weight training is done on the players' own spare time.

Marist employs a full time, nationally certified, director of strength and conditioning. This coach oversees the Iron War Eagle Strength and Conditioning Program for Marist football players. The Iron War Eagle is described in the 2017 Marist War Eagle Football Program as, “an achievement obtained through countless hours of devotion toward improving oneself for the TEAM” (p. 67). Agility and strength and conditioning sessions are offered at Marist throughout the year and during the summer. During the school year these sessions are held before the school day begins and a football player must make 85% of these workouts to be eligible for Iron War Eagle status. The players are tested each year at football camp and in order to be deemed an Iron War Eagle, a player must: bench press 115% of their body weight, jerk press 100% of their

body weight, power clean 110% of their body weight, squat 125% of their body weight, and run twenty 110 yard sprints with a 40 second rest time. These sprints must be performed under 19 seconds for linemen and under 17 seconds for all other position groups. A student-athlete must be able to perform all six of these components to achieve the Iron War Eagle (Marist War Eagle Football Program, 2017).

All of the football players are tested on the first day of camp. If a player fails to be able to run the sprints in the time allotted, they must report to what the coaches term as, “breakfast club.” This is a grueling conditioning session held at 5:30 a.m. every morning before practice at camp begins (Cox, 2012). There is a concerted effort at Marist for players to be stronger and more physical than their opponents and for them to be in better physical shape.

#### Attention to Detail and Organization

Coach Chadwick is a highly organized individual who has a strict routine for practice, meetings, pregame meal, and even the issuing of equipment. In my experience, very few high school teams have practice jerseys that match the numbers the players actually wear in the games. It is this type of attention to detail and attention to the little things that make Chadwick so unique.

Coach Chadwick oversees the issuing and collection of all the equipment at Marist. Although he has an equipment manager, Coach Chadwick likes to organize the equipment room and make sure the helmets are all hung up neatly and the room is clean and organized. Coach Chadwick also ensures that the practice routines and schedule do not change.

Coach Chadwick believes that it is essential that players know what to expect each day and that a routine is essential for high school student-athletes to be able to perform at their highest potential. He will not change or deviate from the team's pregame rituals and schedule. When I interviewed him over the phone he was sitting down to lunch. He stated, "I eat at the same place every day, I get the same thing for lunch every day. I am there right now [both laugh]. It's just the way I am. Discipline." Coach Chadwick also stated that he believed that being structured and disciplined allowed his team to focus on the task at hand. Coach Chadwick stated, ". . . You know I like things in order. I like things neat. I feel the same way about our preparation and our routine. I like doing things the same way, day in and day out. I feel like I am very disciplined that way."

#### Making Meaning from the Traditions of the Football Program and the School

Coach Chadwick spoke of wearing the blue hat, the long blue line, and "ghosts of Marist." These are all evidence to the fact that Chadwick leans on the traditions of the football program and the school. He often stated that it was an honor to wear the blue hat and told the players, "If you do not like it you can turn in your hat. It means something to wear the blue hat."

Chadwick is also proud of Marist's academic tradition of excellence. He stated, "They (the administration) will never lower their academic standards, even for a supposed superstar. This place is not for just average students."

Coach Chadwick believes in the traditions of "Bloody Tuesday" (the physical full- contact practices on Tuesdays) and the gassers (extended conditioning) on Wednesdays are part of the reason for his continued success. He challenged his players

before practice on Tuesday by stating, “If you don’t want to hit and be a part of a physical practice today, you can turn in your hat. I have a rack for it right in there (points to the equipment room).”

Coach Chadwick often spoke of the former players that played at Marist and what their legacy means to the current team. He often challenges his players to live up to the expectations of the people who have played for the school before them (Cox, 2012). There is a long tradition of fielding physical, successful teams at The Marist School that Coach Chadwick embraces and relies upon to inspire his players and give their often grueling endeavors meaning.

#### Correlation to Kouzes and Posner’s Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership

Through the use of interview data, historical program literature, and field observations, the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership from *The Leadership Challenge* (Kouzes & Posner, 2007) that emerge, in order of priority for Coach Alan Chadwick’s practice, are: Inspire a Shared Vision, Model the Way, Enable Others to Act, Challenge the Process, and Encourage the Heart

Although Chadwick engages in all of Kouzes and Posner’s tenets in his leadership style, the two most readily observed Exemplary Practices are Inspire a Shared Vision and Model the Way. Coach Chadwick is very skillful in getting a large group of individuals to believe in each other and function as a selfless collective. Chadwick’s ability to get “buy-in” from his coaches and players is remarkable. He often speaks of the “good of the team” or “to play for your brothers” or “what a player means to the team.” His speech is inundated with the idea that the team and the tradition of the program are much larger than

an individual. Chadwick has the ability to get a group to sacrifice by enduring long, grueling workouts, meetings, and practices and do it with a sense of camaraderie and high morale.

Secondly, Chadwick is able to Model the Way. Coach Euart mentioned that Coach Chadwick sets an example for everyone in his work ethic, attention to detail, and ability to be organized. Coach Chadwick repeatedly stresses that it is going to take hard work and determination if the team wants to be successful and he models this behavior in his preparation every day. Chadwick likes everything to be orderly with minimal distractions. He is a disciplinarian when he needs to be and expects perfection in the execution of the team's plays (Cox, 2012). Chadwick is the example of work ethic and selflessness for the team.

Coach Chadwick enables others to act by delegating coaching responsibilities and duties. At Marist, the offensive and defensive coordinators develop the game plan for each new opponent. Coach Chadwick has given up play-calling duties and relies on others to take leadership roles within the organization. Coach Chadwick is also seen as a coach of coaches in that he develops and supports those around him in an effort to transform individuals under his leadership.

Coach Chadwick is slow to change or challenge the process but he will adopt strategies if he sees an advantage for his team. Coach Chadwick is in a situation where he is surrounded by a formidable and time-honored culture of tradition. This seems to suit Coach Chadwick's personality and leadership style. By his own admission, he likes to do things the same way and to stick to the traditions of the program.

Lastly, Coach Chadwick is reserved in his use of encouragement or praise in his day-to-day operation of the football program. Coach Chadwick rarely shows emotion and usually has a reserved stoicism in most situations. Franklin Cox, who has followed the Marist football team through many seasons and chronicled the program in his 2012 book, *Marist Football; Inside the War Eagle Tradition*, writes of Coach Chadwick, “Chadwick is a taskmaster and an old-school, no-nonsense disciplinarian. He coaches and teaches with a zealous commitment. He demands the same dedication from both coaches and players...” (p.38). Cox (2012) goes on to describe Chadwick’s more compassionate side when he writes, “After a recent heart-wrenching, season-ending loss, he [Chadwick] comforted and consoled each player in the locker room, thanking him for his dedication, praising them for their courage, insisting they hold their head high. He told them he loved them” (p.38).

There is no question that Coach Chadwick cares deeply about each individual on his staff and team. His warmth and caring attitude came through in every conversation that I had with him. His love of football and the Marist football team is clearly evident. Coach Chadwick has a genuine passion for the game of football and his devotion to the young people he comes in contact with every day is palpable in his actions and words.

CHAPTER V  
CASE STUDY OF COACH RICH McWHORTER,  
CHARLTON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

The Setting

Charlton County High School is located in Folkston, Georgia. Folkston is the county seat of Charlton County. Charlton County is the southernmost county in Georgia. Much of its border is the St. Mary River, dividing Georgia and Florida. The western portion of the county consists of the Okefenokee Swamp and Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. In 2015, 12,497 people lived in Charlton County with a median household income of \$42,408.00 (U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2015). In 2015, the median property value in Charlton County was \$82,000.00. The three largest racial groups in Charlton County in 2015 were White, Black, and Hispanic. In 2015, 62.2% of the Charlton County population were White, 25.0% were Black, and 11.3% were Hispanic (U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2015). Charlton County is home to The Okefenokee Swamp Park, The Folkston Funnel Railroad Platform, and Coastal Pines Technical College.

Charlton County is a rural county on the edge of the Okefenokee Swamp. It is a county of vast timber resources and wide open farming land. The school is located at the intersection of Interstate 301 and Indian Trail Road or Georgia Route 40. On the other



side of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, across from the school's vocational annex, sits the abandoned Charlton Memorial Hospital with its tall weeds and unkempt bushes creeping up the tan brick of its one-story facade. There are small houses and mobile homes with sandy yards dotting the landscape around the school.

Charlton County High School is a series of mostly single-story gray cement and metal buildings with red metal roofs. The temperate climate of South Georgia allows the courtyard and hallways of the school to employ an open-air concept covered by a metal roof. The halls of the school are outdoors, but a visitor must be "buzzed in" through a security door to gain access to the inner courtyard of the school grounds. The only two-story structure at the school is the gym and attached weight room. There is a practice field behind the school, used mostly for marching band practice. The playing fields, track, and stadium are located across Indian Trail Road.

It was homecoming week at Charlton County, so the students were either dressed in the official dress-up attire of their favorite sports team for homecoming week or they were in jeans and t-shirts. The front office secretary was sporting her Jacksonville Jaguars jersey and her outfit was complete with wristbands and eye black, the black grease or strip that is applied by football players under their eyes to reduce glare. I signed in and printed out my name tag and was escorted to the library by a student dressed in Florida State attire.

A group of cheerleaders was in the library painting posters advertising the week's festivities. The librarians were very eager to help me locate some history of the school

and football team and showed me to the glass cabinet where the historical artifacts and books were housed.

### The History of Charlton County High School

Charlton County is named for Robert Milledge Charlton who was a lawyer, served in the U.S. Senate, and eventually became the mayor of Savannah (McQueen, 1932). Once home to Creek Indians and comprised of 781 square acres, Charlton County was officially recognized by the state legislature in 1854 (McQueen, 1932). Most of the industry in Charlton County revolves around the growing and harvesting of timber (Harris, 1972).

The first school building in Folkston was built in 1855. In 1921, Charlton County High School was accredited by the state superintendent of high schools. To gain accreditation, the principal of the school, John Harris Jr., promised that the district would build a dormitory to house students who lived too far away to commute each day (Harris, 1972). A fourteen room dormitory called The Teacherage/Oak Hall was erected in the late summer and fall of 1921. In 1932, the dormitory caught fire and burned to the ground, with no known injuries or deaths reported (Harris, 1972). In 1953, the county of Charlton passed a bond measure to build Folkston High School which later would be renamed Charlton County Comprehensive High School. The school in its current location was built in 1983.

During the previous GHSA reclassification cycle, in 2015 the total enrollment at Charlton County High School for grades 9-12 was 461 students (“Georgia High School Association FTE Data Report, 2015”). This enrollment makes Charlton County one A, or

a single A (small) school according to GHSA classification criteria. Charlton County athletic teams play in their classification of single A in Region Two although Coach McWhorter often schedules football games against teams in higher classifications to expose his team to better competition.

#### The History of Charlton County Football

Records maintained by the GHSFHA (Georgia High School Football Historians Association, 2017) for Charlton County Football date back to 1962. However, there is evidence that the school had been playing organized football as Folkston High School as early as 1947. A yearbook in the school's library from 1947 includes a picture of "CCHS First Football Team, Fall, 1947" with the name of the coach, Art Piachaska, and the names of all the players (p.52).

At the end of the 2016, season Charlton County's official record was 383 wins, 242 losses and eight ties. At this time, Coach McWhorter was eighteenth on the all-time wins list for high school head coaches in Georgia with 271 wins (see Appendix D). McWhorter took over as head coach at Charlton County in 1990. His teams have made the playoffs every year since, with the exception of the 2016 season, when the team suffered its first losing record in McWhorter's tenure posting a 3-6 record.

Charlton County teams have won four state championships. They have won the state championship in 1999, 2004, 2005, and 2006 and have played in the state finals game on three other occasions. The most noted players to play for McWhorter and the Charlton County Indians are the Bailey brothers, Ronald, Roland Jr. and Rodney. The

Bailey brothers were offensive and defensive standouts in high school and at the University of Georgia. They seldom left the field as high school and collegiate players.

Roland Jr. or “Champ” Bailey’s high school career was one of legend in South Georgia. As a quarterback he rushed for 3,572 yards with 58 touchdowns and threw for 1,211 yards for ten touchdowns. On defense, Champ recorded 79½ tackles and eight interceptions (Nelson, 2010). All three brothers went on to play professional football. They helped their Charlton County teams win state championships for three years in a row.

#### Unique Traditions at Charlton County High School

At Charlton County, the football team plays at the stadium across the road from the school known as the “The Swamp.” Painted in black and white lettering, framed by two Native American fighting spears, the brick sign under the scoreboard reads, “Welcome to the Swamp, Home of the Charlton County Indians.” A sign on the back of the field house adjacent to the stadium reads, “Charlton County Football, No Excuses.” The Charlton County band plays the Florida State University “War Chant” sometimes termed “Tomahawk Chop” ad nauseam at their football games and the song is the introduction music to the Charlton County football team’s official web page.

The coaches talk about a tradition of toughness and family. Ron Bailey, the former Charlton County standout, was quoted in the Gwinnett Daily Post in 2008 stating, “you are also playing with a lot of relatives. On our team we had, six, seven, eight, heck half the team was relatives. Our parents played together too, so it makes it cool” (“Getting to Know the Bailey Brothers,” Gwinnett Daily Post, June 12, 2008). Boss

Bailey, quoted in the same article states, “If you weren’t playing football growing up, people [in Charlton County] weren’t paying attention to you. We start them young, we start at eight years old and come up through the system. We start working out about the fourth, fifth grade” (“Getting to Know the Bailey Brothers,” *Gwinnett Daily Post*, June 12, 2008).

### Contacting the Participants

Charlton County High School is surrounded by large parking lots and sandy areas of grass. There are pine and hardwood trees scattered about the school grounds which sprawl across Indian Trail Road and include the baseball and softball fields, a separate track, a sandy practice field, and the football stadium. I entered the school through the open air courtyard and after being “buzzed in” through the security door, made my way to the office with some direction from a teacher who greeted me in the hallway. I was early for my meeting with Coach McWhorter, so I was hoping to find the library and make an appointment for the next day to collect some historical artifacts and research the history of the school and its football program.

The front office receptionist had me sign in and print a name tag and asked a student helper to escort me to the library, just a few doors down the hall. The librarians insisted on helping me on this day and showed me to a glass cabinet filled with old yearbooks and a few volumes on the history of the Okefenokee Swamp, Charlton County, and the town of Folkston. I was at a table in the library looking over a photo of the “First CCHS Football Team, Fall, 1947” in an old yearbook when Coach McWhorter walked in through the back door of the library. Apparently, the front office had called him and told

him there was a visitor here looking for “old football items,” and he came to meet me to see if he could help.

I stood and shook Coach McWhorter’s hand. Coach McWhorter stands about 5’9” with the stocky build of a fullback. His hair and goatee were gray. He smiled at me through his reading glasses and shook my hand. He was very patient, friendly, and welcoming. I showed Coach McWhorter the photo and asked him if he had ever seen it before. He replied, “No, how about that, 1947.” Then Coach McWhorter took some time to study the photo. I took some pictures of the photo and the book with the camera on my phone so I could record the image and have the bibliographical information from the book.

Coach McWhorter escorted me to the cafeteria as we made small talk about common acquaintances and experiences. I had never met Coach McWhorter before and assumed he was from South Georgia. The more he spoke, I realized we shared roughly the same Midwestern accent and speech patterns. I said to Coach McWhorter, “You’re not from around here are you?” He laughed and stated, “Either are you I bet. No, I grew up in Illinois.” I related to Coach McWhorter that I had grown up in Ohio and we laughed about two Midwesterners being in South Georgia. Coach McWhorter led me into the small cafeteria with its neat rows of tables and gleaming tile floors. The staff was cleaning up after the day’s lunch service. Coach McWhorter waved to the workers and called to a few of the staff members. He showed me a series of large framed team photos of all the state championship teams and pointed out the Bailey brothers in each and some other players who had gone on to play collegiately or in the NFL. Coach McWhorter

then led me through the gym and into the weight room. He pointed out the track and field records stating, “A lot of our guys were track guys and had some success.” I recognized the names of some of the former and current football players at the school on the track and field records board in the weight room. The room was a large expanse of red rubber flooring with black weights on red painted weight racks. The racks were neatly lined up throughout the room creating aisles. A smaller sign on one wall read, in red lettering, “This is Charlton County.” Painted in black and red lettering, high up on one wall of the weight room was a quote that read, “If you are going to do it . . . DO IT RIGHT! - Bra Ray McMillan.” Coach McWhorter noted that he had each of his guys [football players] in weight training once a day. There was a group of players changing in the locker room and sporadically entering the weight room. Coach McWhorter then led me to his office which was connected to the weight room and had a window where he could see part of the room. I got the sense, during this brief tour, that the weight room was the focal point of the football program.

Coach McWhorter’s desk was strewn with books, videos, and assorted papers. He stated, “My office is a mess. You’ll have to excuse me. It is football season, and this is what it is like.”

Summary of Interview with Coach Rich McWhorter, Charlton County High School  
October 16, 2017 1:30 p.m.

Coach McWhorter was born and raised in Effingham, Illinois and he stayed there until he left for college. McWhorter was the youngest of three boys, and his parents were

divorced when he was in the third grade. His mom owned a restaurant in Effingham for nineteen years and McWhorter worked there while growing up.

Coach McWhorter played high school football and ran track for the Flaming Hearts at Effingham High School. He went on to Eastern Illinois University where he played football for four years and was on the same team as the current New Orleans Saint's head coach, Sean Payton. McWhorter related that he realized while he was in high school that he wanted to coach and be involved with football the rest of his life.

McWhorter graduated in December of 1987 and was a graduate assistant for the football team at Eastern Illinois during the Spring in 1988. During his off hours from helping with the football team and working a part-time job, McWhorter began sending out resumes to try to find a teaching position. He got a list of job openings from the college guidance office and as he states, "randomly sent a resume to Charlton County."

The football coach at Charlton County at the time was Kenny Moore. Coach Moore called Coach McWhorter and asked if he would like to come down and interview for a teaching and coaching position. Coach McWhorter was visiting his girlfriend, now his wife, in Washington D.C. at the time, so the pair drove down to meet with Coach Moore. On the way back to Washington, Coach McWhorter visited Arlington National Cemetery. Coach McWhorter said, "At the bottom of the hill at Arlington there was a bank of pay phones, this is before cell phones now, and I made the call to see if they knew anything and he [Coach Moore] offered me the job." McWhorter admitted he was at a crossroads. He was uncertain about moving to rural South Georgia. Coach McWhorter offered, "I had to pray a lot about it and decided to come on down here."



Coach McWhorter was an assistant at Charlton County for two years when the head coach left at the Christmas break after another unsuccessful season. Coach McWhorter stated, “Everyone either left or was fired. I stuck around. I was 23 years old. Who was going to hire me? Where was I going to go?” McWhorter admitted that the football program had fallen on hard times. He stated, “It was one of those jobs that no one wanted. They had only won 25 games in the decade of the eighties. So, I applied and got the job.” Coach McWhorter stated, “The principal at the time asked me, he said, ‘coach, do you like to hunt and fish?’ I said, ‘Yes sir.’ He said, ‘Good, because that’s all there is to do here in Charlton County.’” McWhorter laughed and said, “Then he told me, ‘If you want the job you can have it, it’s your funeral.’ So, the expectations were not that high.” McWhorter also offered, “I took over the next year and my first year, it was 1990, we made it to the state finals game and lost six to nothing to Lincoln County and we have had a good long run since then.”

Coach McWhorter talked about those early years and how they were able to turn the program around. He said, “We had good assistant coaches, good players, a good strength program, and support from the administration and community.” Coach McWhorter is married and he and his wife have two daughters.

When asked about modeling the behaviors he expects from his coaches and players Coach McWhorter stated, “I have some old school beliefs when it comes to discipline, responsibility. You know, our kids have never worn earrings, even the kids in the middle school know, this is the Charlton County way of doing things and we can’t do that.” Coach McWhorter added, “We don’t cuss our kids. You know, sometimes to

ourselves we might, out of frustration, but not to the kids. We try to run a tight ship. We have drug testing in our program. Things like responsibility, integrity, honesty, we believe in.”

Coach McWhorter stated that the most important attributes a winning coach can possess is to be honest and true to yourself. Coach McWhorter stated, “Players can tell when you not being honest with them so that [honesty] is really important here.”

I asked Coach McWhorter how he shared the goals or the vision for the team and he stated, “We have some words we hang our hat on this year, and really since I got here, is expect to win. Kids may not come out and ask you why are we doing this, but they may be thinking it. You know, why are we lifting weights? Why are we working out in the summer? Why do we have a summer calendar? Why are we squatting? Well, it all comes back to, we expect to win.” McWhorter also stated, “We want to win the day. You know we have to win this Monday. The kids know we are going to squat today, have a long film session, even though we won 28 to nothing we are going to break some things down, we got off to a slow start, we had some poor tackling, it’s not going to be fun.”

Coach McWhorter said he was very willing to challenge the process and change when needed. He has changed the offense multiple times over the years, going from a triple option wishbone, inside-outside veer, to an I formation, to the spread. He also noted that the 2003 team that played for the state championship threw the ball almost every play because they did not have the personnel to run the ball. Coach McWhorter offered, “You know 31 years ago, I was a much younger man. Everything was cut and dry. I was quicker to fly off the handle. Now that I am an older person it is more let’s sit down and

talk about it.” Coach McWhorter explained, “If you haven’t changed over the time I’ve been coaching you wouldn’t still be doing it. Kids are different, parents are different, the administration is different. If you haven’t changed you’d have to be doing something else. Selling cars or selling insurance.” McWhorter also offered that he does not like change but will change if needed. He stated, “We are not going to change who we are. You have to be yourself. You can’t jump on every new fad. When we have changed the offense we did it because we had to, to fit the kids we had.”

When asked about how much he delegates in the operation of the football program and enables others to act Coach McWhorter offered, “My high school football coach, my mentor, I consider him my best friend, he was only nine years older than us when he coached us. He told me to trust your assistants and remember their name is also coach. So I took that to heart.” Coach McWhorter added, “We work off wristbands, and I don’t call plays anymore. Up until last year, I called plays, but I got a young guy now that thinks like I think so I let him call the plays.”

Coach McWhorter uses encouragement in different ways. Sometimes he is more subtle with encouraging the heart than at other times. Coach McWhorter explains, “Sometimes I’ll go around the weight room when the kids are lifting and tell a player, ‘Hey man you had a great game,’ or I can call them in here. I have every kid’s cell phone number in my cell phone so I can call.” Coach McWhorter added that he likes to send inspirational or motivational messages to players via text as well.

I asked Coach McWhorter how important team building and building a sense of community was in helping the team win. Coach McWhorter explained, “It is not really

hard for us here. These kids here grew up together, they played in the streets together, most of them are related to one another.” Coach McWhorter added, “We’re a small community, most of these kids are cousins, so the team building part of it is not a problem for us.”

Coach McWhorter also noted that young children in the community get involved with the football program at an early age. He stated, “We also, if you see us on Friday night, we have almost as many managers as we do football players. I will never run a young kid off. If they want to hang around us they can hang around. It is almost like a daycare.”

Coach McWhorter believes there are some traditions at the school that have helped his teams be successful. He noted, “We have a tremendous band. We do the alma mater after each game. Win or lose. That is something I tell the kids that I am proud of them for. We can have a bad game and lose and they understand that is what we are doing.” The football team is required to sing the alma mater with the band after each game, whether the team wins or loses the game. Coach McWhorter said the team also has a pregame routine they do not like to deviate from. Coach McWhorter stated, “We stay together after school, we have a pregame meal, we do the devotional, we have meetings, then rest time. That has been the way since day one here.”

Coach McWhorter believes he has been able to be successful for a number of reasons. He offered, “I have had good players, good assistant coaches, support from the administration. We have a booster club with a nice checking account and no members. We do some nice fundraisers.” Coach McWhorter also believes that the close-knit

community and the fact that Charlton County is the only high school in the county helps his teams be successful.

Summary of Interview with Assistant Coach Norris Woods, Jr., Charlton County High School, October 16, 2:15 p.m.

Coach Woods was in the ISS (In School Suspension) room when we sat down for his interview. Coach Woods is over six feet tall with the muscular frame of an ex-defensive lineman that still enjoys working out. He struck an imposing figure when he stood to greet me and shake my hand. Coach Woods speaks in a quiet, gentlemanly southern drawl.

Coach Woods grew up in Folkston, Georgia and is one of eight siblings. He said that while his family may have struggled financially, he felt he was lucky to have two parents in the home when many of his friends came from single-family homes. He said his parents are still married today. Coach Woods stated, “Football was all there was. I looked at it as a way to get out and improve my family’s financial situation. Growing up here, really, it was all we had.”

Coach Woods played defensive tackle at Charlton County and graduated in 2002. Woods went on to earn his college degree and play football at Carson Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee, where he saw most of his action at nose guard for the Eagles. Coach Woods stated, “Coach Mac (McWhorter), really went out of his way to get me a scholarship. He knew I couldn’t afford to go to college any other way. He really advertised me. He really is a father figure to me.”

Coach Woods is in his tenth season coaching at Charlton County. Coach Woods stated that he and his wife have been together since the six grade and they have a two-year-old son. Coach Woods stated, “Having a son and being able to teach and coach in the community, I now realize how important the community was to me, so I wanted to come here and give that same resource to the kids coming through the program now.”

Coach Woods said that Coach McWhorter models the behaviors he expects from his coaches and players by being a strict disciplinarian. Coach Woods stated, “He [Coach McWhorter] showed us by being disciplined, by working hard, by showing up every day ready to work, by being humble, by, you know to expect to win. You can expect to win in life and have high expectations for yourself.”

Coach Woods said that Coach McWhorter inspires a shared vision with the team by being a person of good character and being caring but tough. Coach Woods stated, “If you will, you can call it tough love, but it is a family atmosphere. He loves you unconditionally, but he purposely makes things like practice difficult because he understands life can be difficult.” Coach Woods added, “Once you get older you understand what he stands for and what he was trying to do and you can appreciate it a whole lot later on down the road.”

Coach Woods believes Coach McWhorter will change and challenge the process, but only if something is not working for the team. Coach Woods said, “He [Coach McWhorter] is smart about adjusting but he is not going to change some things. He is an old-school type coach. I think he is transitioning to coach the kids we have today. They are different from when you grew up and even from when I grew up.” Coach Woods

offered that he has seen the evolution on offense from when he played for Charlton County. He stated, “We ran the I formation, smash-mouth style, you know, four quarters of war, beat the guy in front of you type football. Today we run some zone read spread type stuff.”

Coach Woods sees Coach McWhorter as a delegator and offers, “Coach Mac, he lets his coaches coach. Now, if you need redirection he knows how to do that but definitely he lets the assistant coaches take the reins and do their job.”

Coach Woods sees Coach McWhorter as more of a disciplinarian than an encouraging coach and offers, “He uses encouragement all the time, but he is going to see how far he can push you, then pat you on the back later.”

Coach Woods believes that building a sense of teamwork and community is the most important thing they do in their jobs as coaches. He stated, “This is not a football program. This is a life skills program. We are building on things together, this togetherness, working together, that carries over in life.”

Coach Woods said there are some unique traditions at Charlton County that help the team be successful. He offered, “We are still allowed to have a devotional before the game. We stay at the school, we stay together, and that helps down the road. The traditions here are that tradition never graduates, no excuses, and expect to win.”

Coach Woods said that Coach McWhorter creates an atmosphere that is conducive to winning. Coach Woods stated, “Coach Mac creates a mindset here to believe in yourself and believe in each other. That comes from working hard and being together.” Coach Woods also believes that Coach McWhorter has been successful

because of his work ethic. He added, “His work ethic is incredible. Sometimes it seems we all work 24/7, you know, all the time, it seems like it, but that is what pays off in the end.”

Summary of Interview with Former Player Mark Smith, Charlton County High School, March 3, 2018, 1:05 p.m.

Mark Smith was a standout quarterback, defensive back, and special teams player during his time at Charlton County High School. He was referred to me by Coach Woods and Coach McWhorter and Coach Woods gave me his contact information. Mark attended Charlton County High School from 1998 through 2001 and played on the football team all four years. Mark Smith and Coach Woods were teammates and roommates at Carson Newman University and remain close friends. Mark played football at Carson Newman and graduated in four years. Mark said he returns to Charlton County at least twice a year to attend football games and visit his former coaches. He follows the team closely each season and attended a playoff game this season when Charlton County traveled to Commerce in the second round of the GHSA state playoffs.

Mark Smith spent much of his childhood in Pierce County but moved to Folkston, Georgia, before starting high school. He lived with different relatives throughout his childhood and mentioned many extended family members who helped raise him. Mark shared some personal information about his childhood that illustrates the circumstances that many of the student-athletes at Charlton County must negotiate. Mark offered, “My father and mother split apart when I was four or five years old. My dad eventually did drugs and went to prison, spent some time in there. I ended up staying with my mom and



with my mother's mom, in Blackshear, in Pierce County." Mark went on to describe how he moved to Folkston before entering high school and with the help of a couple uncles and his paternal grandmother, was able to attend Charlton County High School and participate in football. Mark stated, "From thirteen to seventeen, for me, was the most developing time of my life. Obviously, I didn't have a father figure in my life except for my uncles, and two of them played a major part in me growing up." Mark points to the fact that his extended family members guided him to be involved in activities at the school, especially football. Mark said that playing football at Charlton County may have saved his life and that his contact with Coach McWhorter remains, to this day, the steady influence in his life. Mark offered, "I wouldn't have made it but for football, that's where Coach Rich McWhorter was everything to me. Like, he saved me pretty much."

I asked Mark to what extent Coach McWhorter tried to model the behaviors he expects from others, Mark stated, "Well, there were things that I remember, we had signs too, and I will remember these things 'till the day that I die. They were, expect to win, play like a champion, and no excuses." Mark added, "These things made me the businessman I am today. I don't accept excuses . . . And Coach Mac [McWhorter], we had these black shirts when we would go running, conditioning, that said, 'not satisfied'." Mark credits his success in business to Coach McWhorter. Mark owns and manages a successful valet and parking services business in Atlanta. Mark said that he learned to try to win each day from Coach McWhorter. Mark said he tries to wake up every day with a great attitude and have the best possible day he can have. He credits Coach McWhorter

with this outlook. He explained that his success has come from the work ethic that he learned under McWhorter's coaching and stated, "I am going to continue outworking others around me. But this all came from things that I saw from Rich McWhorter."

Mark said that Coach McWhorter's work ethic was the thing that the coach modeled most and he marveled at the way Coach McWhorter could handle the workload of teaching, coaching, and managing teenagers every day. Mark stated, "At that time we used to stay at camp for like a week. He was away from his family. You know, you're taking on 60 kids under one umbrella, and that's teenagers with male testosterone. That's us fighting, trying to sneak out, us being reckless." Mark stated that as he gets older, he realizes the tremendous amount of work it takes to run a team or business successfully. Mark offered, "As a boss now, and I'm looking at it now, I can only admire him even more. I tell him, 'I love you and I appreciate you more than you will ever know.' He even had me liking Vince Lombardi, like that's my hero now."

When asked about the attributes he feels a winning coach needs to possess, Mark points to the fact that Coach McWhorter did not have any favorites and played the best people for the position. Mark said, "He is going to let the best players play. He doesn't care who your father is or your mother is. Whoever works the hardest and is the best player, Coach Mac is going to let them play." Mark also said that Coach McWhorter was able to limit distractions and made players on the team accountable. He stated, "So, Coach Mac is a master of psychology. For us, back then, we didn't have so much of this social media crap that these kids have today. The only thing we had was what he told us."

Mark said that football in Folkston was a community endeavor and part of the social fabric of the town. He said that many of the student-athletes at Charlton County viewed athletics as a way to get out of Folkston and remove themselves from some of the abject poverty of the rural setting. Mark explained by stating, “Down there, it’s football or nothing. The only way you’re probably going to get out of Folkston, is heck, football.” Mark reminisced about how the town of Folkston was “football crazy” and that he remembers playing football all the time while growing up. Mark described this by stating, “Man, we would sneak onto the football field and have neighborhood football games. I’m talking about full contact, tackle football with no shoes on. It was crazy.”

I asked Mark how much he thought Coach McWhorter was willing to change or challenge the process and he stated, “He has some young coaches around him now. I think they might say, ‘Hey coach let’s try this method.’ Because Coach Mac’s method...will make a kid cry and go home.” Mark also said they were physically pushed to the brink of exhaustion at some practices. He stated, “We would work until we felt like we would die. I mean literally.” Mark stated that Coach McWhorter preached toughness and discipline and that you were expected to play with pain. Mark related a story about his junior year when his entire body was cramping in a game but refused to come out of the game because he did not want to let Coach McWhorter or his teammates down. Mark describes this incident by stating, “I remember one game my entire body cramping up, but I felt like I have to perform. I had so much respect for Coach Mac and so much respect for a guy named Coach Pitts as well, that I feared not performing at my greatest for them.”

Mark also related a story about the expectations for toughness and the outside pressures from the community, when one plays football at Charlton County High School.

He stated:

I mean, one game I played with a broken ankle and it was broken in four places. And then I didn't really know it until the next day. Even my grandmother, she told me that if I went to the hospital and ran up a bill and it wasn't really a broken ankle, she was going to kick my butt. So I had my grandmother and Coach Mac and I was like holy crap I don't think I should go to the hospital. But I knew it was bad so I go to the hospital and they are like yeah, he broke his ankle in four places. And I don't think Coach Mac ever said anything to me about it. He kind of laughed it off. It was that kind of respect we had. I don't think he is going to change that much. That's who he is. He might be willing to change a little bit, because of the younger coaching staff around him and some of his tactics won't work on these younger kids any longer. Times have really changed in coaching.

I asked Mark about his playing days at Charlton County and he recounted that when he was a senior Coach McWhorter asked him to change positions from quarterback to wide receiver. They had a very talented freshman quarterback coming to the program. Mark spoke about the attitude that was forged on the team of unselfishness. Mark stated, "I was willing to do anything for my team. I really just wanted to play and to be the best I could be for them, for the other guys, and for Coach Mac."

I asked Mark if he thought Coach McWhorter used encouragement in his daily coaching practice and he stated, "He has a different way of encouraging folks. He probably told me, 'I love you' more than good job or anything." Mark expounded on Coach McWhorter's coaching style adding, "I don't have the best memory but I can't remember Coach Mac telling me good job. He might give you a slap on the butt. But, you could see it in his face, good job. Or he might tap you on the helmet, something like that." Mark said Coach McWhorter was understated in his praise of great performances. Mark offered, "He might say little things like, 'nice ball' or 'nice catch.' But if you were

to knock somebody's block off (make an impactful hit on an opponent) or make a phenomenal catch, Coach Mac would be like, 'it was alright.' He's that guy."

Mark remembered a few of the traditions that were carried out at Charlton County as part of the football program and related his favorite memory from his high school days. He offered, "The one thing I do remember is that you were able to wear your jersey around on a Friday and you get to have a cheerleader that smells really, really good, put a little favor on your jersey, on your chest." Mark also added that he had a favorite cheerleader who became his high school girlfriend and later, his wife.

I asked Mark why he thought Coach McWhorter was able to win so many games as a high school football coach and he stated, "I think because as a man, he doesn't expect to lose at anything in life. Even when he had a health issue, he's a fighter to the end. He taught us, if you believe it in your mind, you really can beat anything in this world." Mark said that Coach McWhorter instilled a type of spiritual faith in him that he carries with him in his daily life. Mark added, "I personally believe it. It's a matter of spiritual faith and I believe that Coach Mac has that in his mind. That he can beat and achieve anything and I don't want to get too spiritual on you but I do believe God has given him a vision." I asked Mark to explain what he meant by this idea of a vision and he offered, "That he's had the ability to see things before they happen. He's a visionary. Mentally, when things come to pass and all the success on the football field, it's nothing new to him. He could already see this happening before it happened." Mark said that Coach McWhorter had a unique ability to get the team mentally ready to play a weaker opponent that they knew they should defeat. Mark said, "Like he knew teams that we

would beat and he knew a way of convincing us so we were not content. He could convince us of how good [of an opponent] they were.”

Mark said as he got older, he stayed in contact with Coach McWhorter, who helped him through some key decisions in his life. He described how Coach McWhorter was a voracious reader and would suggest a book for Mark to read that fit a particular situation. Mark said, “He is also very observant. He will say some things to you and talk to you and now that I’m older, I believe it more and more. Like some of the books that he reads and gave me to read.” Mark pointed to a few specific books that Coach McWhorter gave him to read that had a profound impact on him. Mark stated, “Like the books, *The Magic of Thinking Big* and *The Energy Bus*. I think they are by a guy named Jon Gordon. I read *The Carpenter* and I realized that he [Coach McWhorter] is practicing these principles and there is no way he can’t be successful.”

I asked Mark if he could add anything else that he would like to say about Coach McWhorter or his time at Charlton County and he explained how Coach McWhorter tries to find the best place for his athletes to go after high school. Mark described how Coach McWhorter helps student-athletes get into the college that will best fit their intellect and personalities so they can experience success. Mark stated, “You know you can get so successful and win so much that it becomes the expectation. I can honestly say that Coach Mac wants what is best for all kids and he has integrity and loyalty.” Mark also wanted to express his gratitude for having the experience of playing for Coach McWhorter. Mark said, “I am so humbly grateful to the utmost. I can’t even put it into

words what he means to me. Heck, I'd do anything for him. He could still make me believe I can run through a wall.”

Field Observations Day One, Charlton County High School, October 16, 2017, 5:20 p.m.

The Charlton County High School practice field sits in the shadow of a white ‘City of Folkston’ water tower. The water tower has a large Native American war spear with a feather attached to it painted in red. The field is directly behind the home side stands of the football stadium. The practice field itself is a large oval of sandy grass with a set of tire tracks encircling it. The area is used for reserved parking during home football games.

As team members begin to walk out to the field from the red and white field house they begin to jog as soon as they hit the playing surface. The team has been in an extended film session in the field house since dismissal from school. Some players have white practice jerseys and some have black jerseys. Most players have white pants and some have black pants. It seems the offensive linemen primarily are in white. Some of the jerseys have numbers and some are plain. The team gathers under the goal post and begins team warm-ups under the direction of one of the coaches. Coach McWhorter stands in the middle of the activity talking with three other coaches. There are 46 players in equipment for this practice. The team lines up on the goal line. After ten minutes of dynamic stretching, some players run a lap around the field while the offensive linemen go to their session with their coach.

The defense is on the field and their coach works on lining the team up against the various formations of the team they will face in their game Friday night. They go through

various “looks” or formations and repeat the “calls” for each. They use a skeleton offense to give the team a simulation of what the other team is likely to do. The skeleton offense consists of just a quarterback (played by a coach) the running backs, a tight end or H back, and wide receivers. There is no offensive line as the defense tries to learn the proper alignments for the week. Off the field, in an area close to the field house, the offensive linemen are led through a series of drills that are intense in cardiac conditioning and very fast paced. They run through shoots of blocking dummies lined up to represent the holes they are to be blocking. While most of the defense is in this learning session, the offensive linemen are hard at work conditioning.

In another area of the field, two quarterbacks are warming up their arms and being led through a series of synchronized drills to improve their footwork. They are in sync in everything they do. They practice dropping back from the line of scrimmage, working on a series of three, five, and seven step drops.

It seems that many of the “skilled” position players (running backs, wide receivers, and defensive backs) play on both offense and defense. Coach McWhorter mentioned that his “O” line (offensive line) do not have to play both ways. Coach McWhorter stated, “his (the offensive line coach) guys are his guys so he can work them pretty much exclusively. He gets a lot of quality work with those guys. We are fortunate that we can do that. It has not always been the case here.”

Coach McWhorter stands in the middle of the activity and does not get involved until the team does a full team scrimmage later in practice. He offers advice on blocking angles to an offensive tackle and stops practice to work on a running back’s footwork.



Then there is a special team period with punting and extra points. The team goes full speed and there is quite a bit of full contact and tackling. There is not much yelling or hollering with the exception of the offensive line coach who did yell and encourage his players loudly and was quite intense.

It is 7:30 when Coach McWhorter calls the team together to speak with them at the end of practice. Coach McWhorter instructs the team to not get distracted during homecoming week. He tells the team that the team they are facing is going to give them, “their best shot.” He means they are going to get the best effort the team has to offer because they chose them for homecoming. He warns the team, “They would like nothing better than to beat you on your homecoming.” Coach McWhorter has a team member “break the team down” or dismiss practice and heads to his office to conduct his weekly radio show.

Field Observations Day Two, Charlton County High School, October 17, 2017, 3:45 p.m.

It is unseasonably warm for mid-October in Charlton County. At 3:45 p.m. the sun reflects off the ‘City of Folkston’ water tower that looms over the Indian’s practice field, blinding anyone who dares to look. There is a small access drive to the field house that runs behind the visitor side of the stadium. It seems that this is where the players park their cars after they drive across Indian Trail Road for practice after school each day. Cars are parked haphazardly along the access drive and at various angles either in the road or in the median under a group of trees. As I park my vehicle in this area, a group of players arrive and run, as a group, into the field house in an effort not to be late to practice.

On this day I was able to walk through an open gate of the stadium and climb the bleachers to the very top row on the home side. From this vantage point, I can see back over the bleachers to the practice field and see across the horizon of Charlton County. It is a vast expanse of green. Beyond the practice field and school grounds are endless miles of pine trees and to my left one can make out the flat, ominous expanse of the Okefenokee Swamp.

I found myself mesmerized by the sheer vastness and quietness of the scene. There are almost no cars on the road. There is no one walking in the streets around the school. It seems the only thing happening today in Charlton County is football practice. There are no distractions because seemingly there is nothing else happening. Football practice proceeds with a focused, almost nonchalant routine. The players are so conditioned with their Tuesday practice routine they seem to know automatically where to go for each drill or phase of practice.

The team lines up again on the goal line before any coaches appear at practice. When one coach appears the players run out in their lines to their designated spots on the field and begin to stretch and do their dynamic warm ups. Today's practice begins with a tackling drill where the players track the ball carrier and wrap them up bringing them to the ground. The quarterbacks are off to the side of the field in the end zone doing their synchronized drills. Today there are 49 players in pads.

This period is followed by kickoff practice followed by a punt return period. Coach McWhorter lets his defensive and offensive coordinators run practice time and

conduct practice on their side of the ball. The team assembles for another full contact drill with just the interior of the line.

Then there is a period when the offensive linemen are with their coach, the defensive linemen go with a coach, and there is a one-on-one passing session in the middle of the field. The quarterbacks and wide receivers confer on a route to run and there is a defensive back trying to defend the route and break up the pass or intercept it. This drill gets Coach McWhorter animated and there is some yelling and instruction while this drill is being conducted.

At approximately 5:30 p.m., parents and team members of the local Pop Warner league begin to arrive at the stadium for their games that evening. Small children file out of their parent's car dressed in white football pants and red and white jerseys with white lettering. Some of the children are carrying their helmets while a few exit their parent's vehicles donning their headgear. They run across the paved parking lot behind an abandoned building to the gate of the stadium. Boys from both teams begin running around on the field, throwing a football to one another and tackling the player who catches it. These boys must be eight years old or younger and most have no fear of contact, running full speed and tackling each other in the open field. Eventually, a coach of one of the teams arrives and sends the teams to separate end zones.

Down on the varsity practice field, the team's scrimmage is fast paced. One coach is spotting the ball (placing the ball down after forward progress) and the offense is progressing toward the parking lot side of the field until they get to the dirt track that encircles the whole area. The team then turns around and the offense faces towards the

field house side of the field. In this drill players are performing what Coach McWhorter terms, “thudding up” or just wrapping up the ball carrier with their arms and not bringing them to the ground. There are several plays where I can hear the contact being made from my spot high above the field. Coach McWhorter explained to me that this saves on injuries and that while they can still be physical or maintain a physical demeanor at practice, players are less likely to be injured if they are not tackled to the ground every day. At 6:38 p.m., Coach McWhorter calls the team up for brief announcements and a player “breaks down” the team and the players are dismissed.

Summary of Follow Up Interview with Head Coach Rich McWhorter, via Phone Call, March 6, 2018, 11:30 a.m.

I spoke with Coach McWhorter a few months after the season. Charlton County’s record was 9-3 in 2017 and Coach McWhorter Indian’s lost two of those games to the two teams that would eventually play for the 1A state championship, Irwin County and Clinch County. Charlton County was back to the elite level of play that Coach McWhorter and their stakeholders had come to expect.

I wanted to get confirmation on the familial ties that bind the Charlton County football team, so I asked Coach McWhorter to explain this phenomenon of his players being related to one another. Coach McWhorter explained, “Yep, well here in Charlton County, we don’t get a lot of move ins or move outs. A lot of our kids have known each other from a young, young age.” I asked Coach McWhorter if he did anything specifically to enhance this bonding of the team and he offered, “Of course we spend a lot of time together in the summer with passing [leagues] and weightlifting. During the

season, they're all together in a weight lifting class. We do spend a lot of time together.” Coach McWhorter had stated that their teams were naturally close due to these familial ties and the fact that Folkston is such a small, rural, and somewhat isolated community. Coach McWhorter stated, “We're a small school, so there is some of that [bonding] that naturally [happens], you know these kids have been together since diapers.”

I asked Coach McWhorter about the off season and if they still held overnight camp. I wanted to see if he thought that camp was a bonding experience for the team and Coach McWhorter explained, “No. We don't do that [camp] anymore. You know the GHSA has changed the rules where you can only really practice one time a day anyway, so that would be a really long, long, rest of the twenty-two hours.” Coach McWhorter did state that in lieu of camp, they now bring the team in for intense preseason workouts and practices at the end of the summer.

Coach McWhorter and his staff emphasize being physical and playing a physical style of football, but he stated he has to be careful in practice because his roster is so small. Coach McWhorter said that while they pride themselves on being physical, tough, and hitting hard, they also have to be weary of injuries. Coach McWhorter explained, “We feel like we play a physical schedule. So we need to be physical, yes, but we have to be very, very careful in what we do because if we lose a player, we not only lose a player, we lose two positions. And even more than that with special teams.” Coach McWhorter said that some schools can get away with tackling to the ground in practice two to three times a week, even late in the season, because they have larger rosters and players who can fill in for injuries. At Charlton County, Coach McWhorter must be strategic in how

they practice so his best players are available late in the season. I asked Coach McWhorter how many times a week his team tackles to the ground and he stated, “Two at the most. And as the season goes on that will even cut back to zero.”

Coach McWhorter has instilled a sense of accountability and work ethic into his program at Charlton County. I asked him to confirm his ideas about the importance of having a strong work ethic and Coach McWhorter stated, “I think work ethic is important to anything you do. I mean anything you do but yes, yes, it’s very important.”

Coach McWhorter has alluded to the fact that the city of Folkston is a small, close-knit community that places great civic pride in the athletic programs at Charlton County. I asked Coach McWhorter to explain the role the community plays in the team’s success and he stated, “I think there is a real appreciation from the community, not only for the football program, but for all our programs. They show up at the stadium for home games, they travel to road games. They are very supportive.”

Coach McWhorter had told me previously that having a routine every day helps his team and coaches focus and helps to eliminate distractions. I wanted Coach McWhorter to confirm his philosophy about having a set schedule for practice, pregame, and the team’s daily activities. Coach McWhorter explained, “Well I think the kids need to be in a routine, in a rhythm, where they know what to expect. They know what’s next. I think if you throw them curve balls they can kind of get out of whack a little bit.”

When I interviewed former Charlton County player Mark Smith, he mentioned how Coach McWhorter’s coaching style has changed over the years. I asked Coach

McWhorter about this willingness to change or challenge the process and Coach

McWhorter stated:

Well I have [changed]. I think you have to. I think maybe the guy at Marist [Coach Chadwick], he's in a position where he don't have to change as much. Our kids have changed and our community has changed. You know everything changes. I don't think anybody is really doing the same things. I don't think Coach Saban [Nick Saban, the Head Football Coach at the University of Alabama] is doing the same things now that he did at LSU or he did at Michigan State or anything like that. In some respects I think we are doing things smarter than we used to do.

Coach McWhorter has built his program by having high expectations and by maintaining those high expectations over the years. I asked him about the success he has experienced and what he credits for his ability to win so many football games. Coach McWhorter offered, "I think success can breed success. I really believe that. You can look at the highest levels. Look at the Patriots, what their expectations are, because of their tradition of winning. Our tradition calls for us to have high expectations."

I asked Coach McWhorter what he thought about some of the new rule changes having to do with limiting contact and limiting practices and Coach McWhorter gave an insightful answer when he stated:

Well, we've adjusted. You know, we go by the book. Do I like 'em? Maybe not so much. You know the contact thing, I don't think we hit more than thirty minutes a day anyway. We spend a lot of time on scheme and a lot of time on technique and with a smaller roster you can't just sit there and beat each other up for hours. You're not going to have a lot left and you are not going to have a lot left when it comes to doing your scheme work. Now as far as the practice stuff, I would still like for us to do some two-a-days. I think that builds some mental toughness and team unity.

Because he was able to change the culture at his school and build a very successful program with limited resources, I wanted to get some advice from Coach

McWhorter. I asked him what he would tell a new head high school football coach who was starting out in Georgia and he stated, “Work like you’re going to be there forever. Work like you are always being watched because you are. You never know where your next opportunity is going to come from.”

Coach McWhorter mentioned to me a few times during our conversations that he understood his role in the school and that there was a hierarchy to any school’s organization that needed to be followed. He mentioned that the current principal at Charlton County High School was one of his former football players and that this fact did not affect his attitude about who was in charge of the school. Coach McWhorter said that some football coaches get confused about their roles in the school. Coach McWhorter said that he always understood his role and this fostered good relations with the administration and earned him their support. Coach McWhorter explained, “Remember you [the head football coach] are there to make the administration happy, the administration is not there to make you happy.”

Coach McWhorter said that at Charlton County they are always trying to learn and get better as coaches. Coach McWhorter said that their goal is to be constantly improving and to never be satisfied. Coach McWhorter added, “Go in with your eyes wide open. Evaluate all facets of your program, the school community. When you get up every day try to figure out how you can make it better for the kids.”

Over the years Coach McWhorter has been able to delegate responsibilities and has encouraged others to take ownership of the football program and has enabled others to act. He no longer calls offensive or defensive plays during the games. Coach McWhorter



lets his offensive and defensive coordinators run practices and develop the game plan for each new opponent. Coach McWhorter is a transformational leader who trains and teaches his assistant coaches and gives them leadership roles in the organization. Coach McWhorter credits this ability to delegate authority for much of his success. Coach McWhorter stated, “When you get some good assistants listen to them, let them coach and do their job and remember that their called coach also, let them coach. Don’t micromanage every situation.”

Single Case Analysis of Coach Rich McWhorter, Charlton County High School

Through the use of interview data, historical program literature, and field observations, the themes that emerge, in order of priority for Coach Rich McWhorter’s leadership practice, are:

High Expectations for Discipline, Hard Work, and Performance

When Coach McWhorter arrived in Charlton County, the football team was historically under-achieving. He had to change the expectations of what it meant to be a member of the football team. By his own admission, he was extremely fortunate in that he had the Bailey brothers matriculate to high school at the same time he took over as the head coach. In his first year as the head coach his team made it to the state championship game. Coach McWhorter had put in place a recipe for success. Sustaining that success was earned through changing the expectations for accountability by the players and the coaches.

Coach McWhorter was able to develop an extensive weight training program and insisted on attendance, effort, and performance. Coach McWhorter brought a new level

of professionalism to high school football coaching in Charlton County. He has instituted mandatory drug testing in the football program, hired and trained loyal and dedicated coaches, and changed the level of expectations for winning. As evidence, the team's slogans are "expect to win" and "no excuses."

Every football player is in a weight training class during the day with Coach McWhorter and the assistant coaches. Coach McWhorter and his coaching staff have raised the level of performance through a commitment to an off season conditioning and weightlifting program, intense physical practices, accountability, and work ethic. He has built a large weight room and equipped it to accommodate his athletes. The Charlton County football weight training program has been developed by Coach McWhorter over the years and is a mixture of workouts that Coach McWhorter learned from university and professional teams' programs. The team works out in four week cycles and tests what Coach McWhorter terms the "core lifts" at the end of each cycle. The core lifts are the squat, power clean, and bench press. In the off season the team lifts five days per week and during the season the team lifts four days per week.

Coach McWhorter has developed a routine for practices and pregame that allows his team to focus on the task at hand. He has created a culture of success where winning is the only acceptable outcome. In the process, he has maintained a commitment to character building and humility. This humility is epitomized by his insistence that in victory or defeat, the entire team will sing the alma mater with the band at the end of every contest. McWhorter is humble and shares the credit with his assistant coaches. He lets them coach, take ownership of the program, and demands that they perform at the

highest levels of their professional craft. He annually assesses every aspect of the program and develops methods and plans for improvement.

McWhorter is, by all accounts, an excellent teacher, who understands the importance of the hierarchal structure of his school. He is able to work within this structure, making allies of the teachers, noncertified staff, and administration. This was evidenced by the way he interacted with the secretaries, teachers, librarians, and lunch room staff during the site visit. He bantered with the lunch room staff and expressed humility when he spoke about how it was his job to make the administration happy and not the other way around.

Coach McWhorter often referenced what he termed, his “old-school” beliefs about discipline and hard work. During the site visits he was checking laundry, watching game film, instructing classes in the weight room, coaching practice, and taping his radio show. Coach McWhorter exemplified the attributes of hard work and discipline for his players and coaches.

#### Honesty and Integrity are the Cornerstones of Success

Coach McWhorter repeatedly mentioned that it was imperative that the head coach deal honestly with players. He often referred to being genuine or being yourself or being true to yourself. He believes that leaders with integrity can be successful and that team members can tell when a coach is not being honest with them. He stated in his interview, “you can’t go changing things, your offense or who you are to try to be like the latest thing or fad, you have to be who you are.”

Both assistant coach Norris Woods, and former player Mark Smith noted that Coach McWhorter was honest and had integrity. During his interviews, Coach McWhorter was very direct, forthcoming, and plain spoken. Coach McWhorter was genuine and did not view doing such things the team's laundry or picking up the locker room as beneath him.

Coach McWhorter also mentioned that they like to "follow the rules" and "go by the book" when it came to the GHSA rules and bylaws. He took pride in this fact and a point in telling his team, "We are going to do it right with no shortcuts." The team chaplain, Brother Ray MacMillan even gave the team one of their slogans that is written on the weight room wall that reads, "If you are going to do it, do it right."

Coach McWhorter's philosophy of "doing things the right way" and "doing what is the best for the kids" is a key ingredient in the formula for success in the Charlton County Football Program. Coach McWhorter is honest in his dealings with players and he is honest with his assessments of the football program and where they need to make improvements.

#### Build a Program with the Children in the Community

It is a fair assessment that Charlton County high school football is an enormous source of civic pride for the Folkston community. The many youngsters that act as managers for the football team on Friday night are evidence that the children in the community want to be a part of such a successful entity. Coach McWhorter has been able to capture this audience and capitalize on this youthful enthusiasm by holding youth camps and having the middle school team work out with the varsity. No doubt these

youngsters emulate the members of the football team and have high expectations to someday wear the black and red of The Charlton County Indians and play under the lights on Friday nights in The Swamp.

During observations of practice I witnessed the strong organized youth football presence conducted by the local recreation department. Both former player Mark Smith and Coach Woods described “pick up” football games that happened regularly in the streets, or when they would sneak onto a field, while they were growing up in Folkston. Football is a part of the culture and community in Folkston, but it is important to recognize that this was not always the case. Before Coach McWhorter arrived in Charlton County, the teams at Charlton County did not experience great success. In fact, through the decade of the 1980s, the football team at Charlton County won only 25 games and never made the playoffs. Although they had gone to five quarterfinals and one state final game, the overall record at Charlton County since 1962, before Coach McWhorter took the helm, was a dismal 113-168. That McWhorter was able to build a culture of winning and gain community support, with very little in the way of resources, is a remarkable accomplishment.

For the participants in the study, football was viewed as “a way out of Folkston.” For two of the participants, Coach Norris Woods and former player Mark Smith, this was a reality. They were able to attend a four year college on football scholarships and earn their college degrees. The enormous impact that Coach McWhorter has had on the lives of his players and the lives of the people in Charlton County is difficult to measure.

## The Team is a Family

One unique aspect of the Charlton County High School Football team is the number of relatives that play together on each team. This unique familial arrangement creates a solid natural bond on the team. Coach McWhorter recognizes this aspect of his teams and nurtures a family atmosphere where he can get the team members to play for each other and be a part of something larger than individual accomplishments.

The team would “go to camp” during the early years of McWhorter’s tenure, but since the GHSA has changed the rules to limit the frequencies of practice during the preseason, the team no longer stays at the school. The teams used to “go to camp” and stay overnight in the gym together for a week but the team has discontinued the practice, replacing it with daily work out and practice sessions over the summer. Coach McWhorter believes the team bonds are strong because of the generational and familial connections that are present at the school and in the football program. Coach McWhorter also believes that these bonds are strengthened through grueling workouts and practices.

## It’s the Community’s Team

Coach McWhorter understands that the town of Folkston and the people of Charlton County take a great amount of pride in the success of his teams. He is active in the community and has the players present at community festivals and public events in and around Folkston. He has his own radio show and podcast every week and has been able to publicize his football program and market the team effectively to the community. Coach McWhorter sells his old, unusable helmets at the Okefenokee Swamp Festival

every year as a fundraiser and has made football Friday's in Folkston the premier attraction for community members.

Through his marketing Coach McWhorter has been able to finance the football operations of the school, purchase new weight room equipment, and keep his teams equipped with the latest technology. Because of the team's success, the town and surrounding community supports the team by attending home games and traveling to away games.

A Correlation to Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership from the *Leadership Challenge* (2007)

Through the use of interview data, historical program literature, and field observations, the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2007) that emerged, in order of priority for Coach Rich McWhorter's leadership practice, are: Model the Way, Challenge the Process, Inspire a Shared Vision, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.

Although Coach McWhorter engages in all of Kouzes and Posner's (2007) tenets in his leadership style, the two most readily observed Exemplary Practices are Model the Way and Challenge the Process. Coach McWhorter was able to change the perceptions of the football team at Charlton County and change the expectations for accountability among the players and coaches. He was able to do this by modeling the behaviors he expected from his team members and coaches. McWhorter modeled the hard work it would take to be successful by pouring over game film, fundraising, and building a new

weight room. Through his diligence and effort he was able to secure the funding and build a new field house for the football team.

Coach McWhorter came up with the team slogans “expect to win” and “no excuses” and refused to accept anything but the best effort from the players and staff. He holds himself to very high expectations and standards and challenges everyone around him to follow his lead.

Secondly, Coach McWhorter has had to Challenge the Process. Coach McWhorter admitted that when he was younger, he used to “fly off the handle” but has learned to talk things out now and use reason and judgment. Coach Woods related that Coach McWhorter used to run a “smash mouth” type I formation offense when he was in school but has changed offenses several times over the years to adapt to the personnel that he has on each year’s team. Former player Mark Smith has witnessed how Coach McWhorter has changed his coaching style, adapted his offenses and defenses to fit the team’s personnel, and changed the culture at his school.

Coach McWhorter offered that one year he did not have a very good offensive line and they did not think they could run the ball effectively, so they threw the ball almost exclusively. Coach McWhorter was able to grasp that young people are different now and parents may treat coaches differently and he has been able to adapt and change with the times effectively. Coach McWhorter is a person who seems to be always learning, studying, and growing. He is surely not one who is afraid to challenge the process when he deems it is necessary.



Coach McWhorter was able to inspire a shared vision by coming up with the first team motto in his first year as the head coach of, “Expect to win.” He was able to change the expectations first on the football team and eventually in the school and community.

Over the years Coach McWhorter has been able to delegate more and more of the coaching duties and responsibilities to his assistant coaches. At the beginning of his career Coach McWhorter describes himself as “very hands-on” meaning he did everything himself. He has learned to trust his assistants over the years and even gave up offensive play-calling duties this past season.

Coach McWhorter is subtle in his praise and understated. He does not engage in hyperbole, but is an expert at motivating young people to perform to the very height of their potential.

## CHAPTER VI

### CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Comparing these two case studies offers an opportunity to examine the phenomenon of highly successful head coaches in very different circumstances. This chapter is organized around the research questions that have guided this study from the beginning. By bringing the context and reality of each case to the research questions we may be able to understand the correlations taking place (Stake, 1995).

#### Cross-case Analysis

To synthesize the realities for both coaches in each individual case, a checklist was used to check off the number of times each coach mentioned a concurrent theme or when a theme was emphasized in the interviews, at practice, or during the after practice meeting (Stake, 1995). Over the course of each site visit, and through the course of the various interviews, these themes emerged, evolved, changed, and were redefined and reworded. Through this qualitative analysis and triangulation of data, the aim was, as Patton (2002) states, “to convey a sense that you are dedicated to getting as close as possible to what is really going on in whatever setting you are studying” (p. 93).

While the two coaches share some commonalities in their practice, some striking differences emerged. Transcribed interviews, historical documents, and field notes were used to determine the emphasis that head coaches placed on each of Kouzes and Posner’s

(2007) Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership from their work *The Leadership Challenge*. While inquiring about the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership (2007) some unique environmental elements of each setting were discovered.

#### Themes Across Cases

RQ1: What are the attributes that are shared among the most successful high school football coaches in the state of Georgia?

#### The Head Coach Exemplifies a Strong Work Ethic

Both Coach Chadwick and Coach McWhorter repeatedly emphasized the importance of having a strong work ethic. McWhorter expressed this as the “grind.” McWhorter stated, “Today, it’s Monday. It’s a long grind. We are going to squat. Watch film. Have a long practice. The kids know that. They know what is expected.” He also stated, “You have to have a strong work ethic. It’s required of the coaches and the kids.” Coach Woods stated, “Coach Mac (McWhorter), he believes in having a strong work ethic and that you can accomplish things through hard work. That is what he stresses more than anything.”

Coach Chadwick expressed this by stating, “I believe in attention to detail. I like everything to be orderly with no distractions. That’s why we practice our plays with endless repetitions. Practice makes perfect.”

Evidence of this work ethic was also observed at both schools during the site visits. McWhorter was checking the laundry and filming his internet show late into the evening while Coach Chadwick was observed breaking down game film and setting up the practice field. This work ethic carries over to the assistant coaches and to the team.

There is a work ethic that is evident, emphasized, valued, and prioritized with the offseason and in-season weightlifting programs at both schools. The off-season conditioning and weightlifting programs were a top priority for both coaches. McWhorter stated, “When I got here there was one weight bench and about 50 pounds of weights so we changed that. We built this weight room and have equipped it over the years. Everything we do centers around this room.” Coach Chadwick said, “We have the Iron War Eagle and we test the kids at camp. That is extremely important for us because most of our kids can’t have weight training during the day because of their rigorous academic schedules.”

#### The Head Coach Maintains High Expectations

The mantra of the Charlton County Football program created by Coach McWhorter is, “Expect to Win.” This motto is posted in the weight room, on the side of the field house, and in the locker room. Furthermore, McWhorter maintains tangible high expectations for accountability (the coaches take attendance at summer workouts and practices) and behavior (the athletes are drug tested three times a year).

Coach Chadwick maintains high expectations more subtly. He feels his student-athletes know what is expected of them but will threaten them with “taking up their hat” or taking their helmet if they don’t like the demands required of them. Chadwick stated, “For good teams, the season begins in week eleven.” This statement expresses the sentiment that his teams expect to make the playoffs every year.

## The Head Coach Fosters Relationships that Build Commitment to the Team

At Charlton County, Coach McWhorter relies on a network of familial ties to the football program that go back for generations. There is a natural bond among the teammates as many of them are related to one another and have grown up together. Coach McWhorter also requires a commitment from his players to the team by making summer workouts compulsory and holding individuals accountable in all phases of their membership on the team. He requires the seniors to get to know the freshman. He stated, “I will take a senior and say, ‘Look, I want you to be able to tell me about this eighth grader coming up to high school. Tell me if he can play at all, who he is related to.’ I really want the senior to invest in the young guy and get to know him.”

Coach Chadwick also expressed the importance of forging relationships over and over during the site visit. Coach Chadwick stated, “You know you will remember the wins and losses, but what you really remember are the relationships you have with the coaches and the other players, that bond is something special.” Assistant Coach Euart stated, “Marist is a pretty special place. The relationships you form here last a lifetime.” Coach Euart and Coach Chadwick pointed to their summer camp experience working as a bonding agent for the team. It is a time when the team members sleep in the same room and eat all their meals together. They endure the pure hell of the practices together in the summer heat, sometimes three practices a day. They all shave their heads at Marist as a sign of unity at the beginning of camp. Chadwick tries to reinforce this idea of selflessness by not issuing single digit numbers to players. He believes that these numbers call too much attention to individuals when the emphasis should be placed on

team unity. Coach Chadwick offered, “I like the team chemistry on this team. When you have smart kids who play for each other you have a chance to be successful.”

Urban Meyer (2017), the highly successful collegiate coach, suggests that the players on a team must trust each other like soldiers in combat. Myer writes, “The task of building this trust, a bond so strong that it inspires people to give everything they have for the sake of the team, is one of the most important jobs of any leader” (p.123). In the military this idea is called combat motivation. What inspires soldiers to risk their lives for one another and engage in combat? Meyer (2017) believes this bond is created through shared experiences and writes, “. . . it [this bond] is built through training and then through combat itself. The unit becomes a family. The guys in the unit become a band of brothers. Soldiers fight for each other. This is the heart of combat motivation” (pp. 123-124).

RQ2: What do these coaches perceive to be the leadership qualities that are necessary for success as a high school football coach?

The Head Coach Puts the Team First

The speech of Coach Chadwick and Coach McWhorter is filled with the overarching message that they will make all decisions based on what is for the good of the team. Both coaches emphasized the fact that football is very much a “team” game and it takes a complete, united effort to achieve victory. Coach Chadwick offered, “Teamwork, it’s what it’s all about isn’t it?” Coach McWhorter stated, “If you can get the kids to be disciplined and buy in to the team and be a good teammate. You know, those

are the things we hang our hat on here. Discipline, hard work, honesty, respect, being a good teammate.”

#### The Head Coach is Humble and Gives Others Credit

Both men were extremely humble. They gave others credit for their success. Coach Chadwick stated, “If we’ve had any success it is because we have had smart kids who are willing to play for each other. We have had excellent assistant coaches who, you know most them went to school here, played here. But what I mean is that they are loyal to Marist and dedicated.” Coach McWhorter stated, “We have been lucky because we have had great players and great assistant coaches.” These men give others credit. They are humble about their records of success. They both espouse the notion that team unity is more important than the individual.

#### The Head Coach Delegates and Allows Others to Lead

Both coaches delegate responsibility and authority. Neither of these two head coaches call the plays on offense or defense. Their assistant coaches run practice and develop the game plan each week. While each head coach still has their hand in helping to formulate the game plan, it is up to their offensive and defensive coordinators to devise the scheme for each new opponent.

Both coaches also let their seniors lead the team from within. Coach Chadwick stated, “It is the seniors’ team. They know that. We have a good group this year so we have a chance [to be successful].” Coach McWhorter stated, “You know each group is different but it is the seniors who are going to lead the team. We rely on them to do the right thing. They know what to do by the time they are seniors. If you’re lucky that senior

group is used to playing 14 or 15 games, they understand the grind, and the expectation is there.”

Both coaches also emphasized the importance of loyalty from their assistant coaches. Both men believe that giving assistant coaches more responsibility helps to foster loyalty to the program. Coach McWhorter stated, “I am not calling plays this year. I have a young guy who is doing a great job and he has earned the right to call the plays. Now, there are some responsibilities that go with that but he understands that.” Coach Chadwick offered, “I like loyal people. Loyal, dedicated people. That is what we try to have here at Marist.”

RQ3: What are the unique traditions that are present at the schools where these men coach, and how do these traditions assist in their success?

While these two schools have very different socio-economic factors in play, they both retain a vast amount of school pride in their football programs. Former players at both schools often come back year after year to watch their teams on Friday nights. Both student bodies and the surrounding communities identify and derive meaning from the accomplishments of these two successful programs.

It became evident at both schools that there was a story behind the success of the teams. This story was important to the stakeholders at both schools and in both communities. At Marist, I heard two different versions of the same story about the 2003 state quarterfinal game. This was the game that Sean McVay (now the head coach of the Los Angeles Rams) called his own “naked bootleg” (a run by the quarterback to the opposite direction of the called play without any lead blockers) play and scored the



decisive touchdown vs. the Shaw High School Raiders. At Charlton County, I heard former players and coaches talk about the Bailey brothers and their exploits playing for the Indians.

Both coaches offered evidence that the traditions at the schools helped them be successful. Coach Chadwick stated, “Well, we have the long blue line and the tradition of the blue hats. That means something here.” While Coach McWhorter stated, “Win or lose we are going to sing the alma mater. That is something I am proud of. That our kids know how to win and lose with class. That is the expectation here.” It was the fact that there was a history of winning at each school. This success was almost solely created by the current head coach in each case and it has raised the level of expectation from the team members, coaches, school administration, and community. There is a pressure and an expectation at both schools to win football games. This collective expectation places a priority on the football program. As a result, both teams are well-equipped and financially stable.

Table 1  
*A Comparison of Themes in Each Case*

| <b><i>Head Coach Alan Chadwick</i></b>                                       | <b><i>Head Coach Rich McWhorter</i></b>                      |
|--|--|
| Building a Sense of Team Unity through Relationships and Team Activities     | High Expectations for Discipline, Hard Work, and Performance |
| A Strong Work Ethic Exemplified from the Head Coach and Expected of Others   | Honesty and Integrity are the Cornerstones of Success        |
| Attention to Detail and Organization   | Build a Program with Children in the Community               |
| An Emphasis on Playing a Physical Style of Football within a Standard System | The Team is a Family   |
| Making Meaning from the Traditions of the Football Program and the School    | It's the Community's Team                                    |

Cross-case Correlation to Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership

Both coaches in the study employ all of Kouzes and Posner's (2007) Five Practices of Leadership from their work *The Leadership Challenge* in the operation of their football programs. Through careful coding it was determined that generally, both coaches place the importance of Kouzes and Posner's (2007) Five Practices of Leadership, in the following order:

1. Model the Way. Both coaches are the example of a strong work ethic for everyone in their organization.
2. Inspire a Shared Vision. Both coaches place a great deal of emphasis on fostering relationships that create a sense of belonging, selflessness, and commitment to the greater good of the team.

3. Enable Others to Act. Both coaches delegate authority to their assistant coaches and have senior team members take responsibility for the daily leadership of the team.
4. Challenge the Process. Both coaches do not believe in change for the sake of change. They are willing to examine what they are doing and assess their systems but are generally slow to adopt new systems. Instead, both coaches believe in perfecting the systems they have in place.
5. Encourage the Heart. To a great extent, both coaches are teachers who use correction and instruction more than encouragement.

#### Summary of the Findings

These two successful coaches rely on hard work and diligence and an organizational commitment to the greater good of the team. They foster relationships and share responsibilities with many stakeholders, making the betterment of the team an organizational priority. This priority emphasizes the team over the individual, and for the team members, fosters a feeling of belonging to something that is greater than the self. Moreover, these leaders treat each individual with the same rules and consequences regardless of their status on the team or their ability.

This selflessness enables team members to give a maximum effort, not for individual accolades or honors, but for the success of the team. Some coaches call this “buy in.” The team members have “bought into” this idea symbolizing that they have paid a price to belong on the team and believe in the process of improvement laid out by the coaches. Furthermore, the coaches get the team members to believe that they are

“playing or performing for each other.” The coaches create a dreaded fear in the players of letting the team down. Therefore, team members are willing to sacrifice and endure pain in an effort to get bigger, stronger, faster, and better trained than their opponents. This sacrifice further bonds the team members and creates an esprit des corps among the team members and coaches.

Generally, these two head coaches are not quick to encourage their players. They are more likely to instruct and correct individuals. This is not to say that they fail to motivate their teams. Each coach definitely has a gift of understanding the collective temperament of their teams and will motivate or encourage when needed. The expectation for performance is so high on both teams that the players know what is required of them. Most of the players have been in the respective football programs for the majority of their youth. They know what is expected of them by watching the other players and teams that have gone before them.

Each coach is willing to change to some extent but each is very hesitant and careful about changing the systems they have in place. Both men do not like to deviate from their routines. They mandate that the team maintains the same practice regiment from week to week and they insist on the same pregame routine for their teams.

The coaches believe that there is a value in maintaining the traditions of the school and their respective football programs. These unique traditions add a richness to the school life of the students at each school and are a source of pride for the alumni. Stakeholders derive meaning from these traditions and more readily identify with the school and its teams as a result.

Coach Chadwick and Coach McWhorter share a genuine passion for the game of football and using the game for teaching young people to believe in themselves and in each other. They are motivated by inspiring young people and teaching them the values of having a strong work ethic, being accountable, and being responsible.

After studying these two highly successful head football coaches it has become evident that if one would like to be a successful head high school football coach in Georgia the requirements are:

1. You must build a team that works together. Football is the ultimate team sport. To be successful it requires all facets of the team working in unison. You must build relationships and form bonds on the team.
2. You must get the players and coaches to work towards the greater good of the team and be willing to sacrifice individual accolades and accomplishments for the team's betterment.
3. You must be willing to put a great amount of time, dedication, and sacrifice into learning and performing the craft of coaching young people in a very competitive contact sport.
4. Your team must be physically stronger than your opponent. You must develop a measurable weight training program with accountability for your team members.
5. You must be physically tougher than your opponent. Your team members must be able to take contact and administer contact without detrimentally affecting their performance.

6. You must be mentally tougher than your opponent. Your team members and coaches must be able to overcome adversity and shifts in momentum in game situations.
7. Your team must be better physically conditioned than your opponent.
8. You must earn the support of the administration and staff of the school, the parents of your team members, and the members of the community.
9. You must ensure that your coaches and team members are representing your ideals and team beliefs in the classroom, the hallways of the school building, and in their social lives.
10. You must embrace and continue the unique traditions that are present at your school.

## CHAPTER VII

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This study was limited in scope by the willingness of the participants. I sent out seven requests to school districts for access to their head coaches. Only two of the organizations responded to the request and permitted me to visit their schools. While it is difficult to generalize from such a small sample size, the disparity of socio-economic and geographical factors between the schools may allow us to draw some valid conclusions about the effectiveness of each coach's leadership style. The coaches are doing many of the same things, in very different circumstances, and these things are working.

The most striking aspect that emerged from both coaches' leadership practice was the emphasis that was placed on building a sense of loyalty and community. The coaches believe that team building plays an integral part in the success of their programs. They engage in team camps, intense team workouts, and team activities that purposely create emotional bonds among the players. Martens (2004), Ramsayer (2011), and Trimble (2005) emphasize teambuilding activities and a commitment to the team. Allan Trimble (2005), the head coach for the Jenks High School Trojans, who in 22 years has won 13 Oklahoma State Championships, writes, "All of us can do it together, none of us can do it alone. From the first day of summer workouts through fall camp and on throughout the season, we preach that the team comes first" (p. 5).

Of all the aspects that contribute to the success of their teams, this spirit de corps is perhaps the most crucial. At Charlton County it occurs almost organically. Their players feel a natural bond towards one another through familial relationships and by growing up in a close-knit, somewhat isolated community. Coach McWhorter at Charlton County makes sure these bonds are strengthened by an intense summer workout schedule and accountability to the team. At Marist, experiences are planned for players to engage in bonding activities. There is also a shared formal religious ceremony, the team masses, the Marist team experiences together throughout the year. Cox (2012) chronicles a typical Marist experience at their summer camp at Riverside Military Academy one year in his work *Marist Football; Inside the War Eagle Tradition*. Coach Chadwick delivered a speech to the team and stated, “Believe in yourself, believe in your teammate and respect him. Be tough” (p. 43).

Both coaches preach about being unselfish and putting the team above individual accomplishments. At Marist, this unselfishness is such a part of the team culture that players in the past have insisted that the plain blue helmets not have any emblems put on them. The players identify with the plain, no nonsense, workmen-like helmets that the players before them wore. I also witnessed players at Marist admonish another player for not running his required laps at practice by stating, “it’s not about you.” They were letting this player know that it is about the team, not an individual. At Charlton County this attitude was evident when former player, Mark Smith, described his reaction when he was told that he would have to change positions his senior year from quarterback to wide



receiver. Mark stated, “I didn’t care. I just wanted to play. I just wanted to help my team, help my brothers.”

Some other factors that stood out as imperative to success for both coaches were the time commitment, work ethic, and dedication it took to lead their teams. This is supported by much of the literature including Ramsayer (2011) when he writes, “You can’t be a clock watcher and be successful [as a head football coach]” (p. 4). Paul “Bear” Bryant (1983) states, “Our theory of how to develop a winning team is very simple - WORK! If the coaches and players will work hard, then winning will be the result” (p. 23). Few people realize the dedication and work ethic it requires to be successful at the high school level in Georgia.

One enlightening fact that this research discovered was that the players that these coaches had on their teams were enrolled in their schools naturally. They were not recruited to be there and they didn’t transfer to the school district for the sole purpose of playing football. Coach McWhorter even stated in his interview, “No one is moving to Charlton County to play football. In fact, we might lose a couple of kids each year who think they will be better off somewhere else. Our kids are our kids. They have been coming to practices and games since they were little.” Coach Chadwick stated, “Our students enroll here in the seventh grade. It is difficult to get in academically. These are the kids we get. These are the kids we get so we have to build the system they can be successful in.” Both coaches believed in developing the players they had in their system. They did not believe in recruiting or trying to find talented players from another school district. For both coaches, this was logistically and situationally not possible. Both

coaches rely heavily on player development. This notion is also supported by the literature. Trimble (2005) states, “We want players to leave us better people than when they arrived...The sport of football parallels life. Those that have the work ethic and attitude will succeed, and those that don’t won’t succeed” (p. 9). Urban Meyer (2017), who has won National Championships at both the University of Florida and Ohio State, writes, “We believe that being elite is not about how talented you are. It is about how tough you are. To achieve anything great you have to fight for it. Every day. The grind is mental and physical” (p. 89). Player development is a key component to the success of a football program (Martens, 2004; Meyer, 2017; Ramsayer, 2011; Trimble, 2005).

Both teams place a great deal of emphasis on being more physically tough than their opponents. They pride themselves on being better conditioned than the teams they compete against. Most importantly, they place a great deal of emphasis on being stronger physically than their opponents. They achieve this by implementing an intense weight training program that has a measurement component. At Marist, players are measured formally at the beginning of summer camp. At Charlton County, players are measured every four weeks to monitor their progress. While both programs approach weight training differently due to the situations of their school settings, measurable weight training is a major part of each coach’s core philosophies. This emphasis on a robust strength and conditioning program is consistent with successful football programs around the country (Allen, 2006; AFCA, 2002; Holtz, 1998; Kralic, 2008; Meyer, 2017; Martens, 2004; Ramseyer, 2011). It would enhance the study to have more participant head coaches. It would also be beneficial to have a pregame observation with the teams. I

believe one could learn a vast amount about some of the cultural aspects of the team by experiencing a pregame meal and pregame routine. It would also enhance the study if more time was spent with each participant and at each site. Unfortunately, my own employment requirements prohibited me from being with the teams for an extended period of time and on game night.

I insisted on using the real names of the schools I visited and the coaches I interviewed. I wanted to be able to give the study a sense of authenticity and I wanted to be able to describe real places that would resonate with people familiar with high school football in Georgia. If I referred to a student-athlete, I used a pseudonym. I don't believe the coaches in the study held anything back because they knew their real names were being used, but I cannot be certain.

Finally, the two main participants in the study are remarkable leaders. Any person in business can extrapolate the things they are doing and emulate them and find some measure of success. Their leadership tenets, principles, and practices are universal. Any coach who emulates them will be successful. But let me warn you. It will take mountains of hard work and dedication. You will lose. You will fail. People will be angry and disappointed in you. You will be tasked with mending broken-hearted teenagers after a devastating loss. Along the way you will learn that what makes you successful is not your name in the record books, it is the young people who come back after they have graduated from college and are experiencing the real world, and thank you for teaching them the values of teamwork, sacrifice, work ethic, and dedication.

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APPENDIX A:

Head Coach Initial Interview Instrument

## APPENDIX A:

### Head Coach Initial Interview Instrument

Coach, I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me today and I wanted to assure you of a few things before we begin. I do have your permission to record this interview and I will be recording this interview and transcribing it. When I am finished transcribing this interview I will submit it to you for you to check for the accuracy of your statements. I also would like to reiterate that I am only seeking the good in your program and the things you feel have enabled you to enjoy success. I also want to make sure that you are aware that this study will use your real name and will identify and describe the school, the setting, and participants by using identifying descriptions and real names. I will not identify any students or minors in the study by name and will use pseudonyms if students are mentioned or observed in the study.

1. Can you tell me a little about where you grew up and about your childhood?  
(Background Question)
2. Can you tell me about your education and where you attended school?  
(Background Question)
3. Can you tell me a little about your coaching and teaching experience up to this point? (Background Question)
4. Can you tell me about your family? (Background Question)
5. Coach, can you tell me to what extent you try to model the behaviors you expect from your coaches and players? (Model the Way)

6. Can you tell me what you feel are the most important behaviors or attributes for a winning coach to possess? (Model the Way)
7. Can you tell me to what extent you try to inspire a shared vision for your coaches and team? (Inspire a Shared Vision)
8. Can you tell me what methods you use to share goals in your program? (Inspire a Shared Vision)
9. Coach, how willing are you to challenge the process or change the way you do things? (Challenge the Process)
10. Can you give me an example of a time when you had to change your methods or routines? (Challenge the Process)
11. How much do you delegate in the operation of the football program? (Enable Others to Act)
12. Can you give me an example of what you do to enable others to act and take ownership of the program? (Enables Others to Act)
13. Coach how much do you use encouragement of individuals in your coaching practice? (Encourage the Heart)
14. How important is team building and building a sense of community to your team's success? (Encourage the Heart)
15. Can you describe any unique traditions that are present here at the school that you feel have assisted you in your winning tradition? (Research Question)
16. Why do you feel that you have been able to win so many games? (Research Question)



17. Is there anything else that you would like to add or tell me today?

Coach, I would really like to thank you for your time today and truly appreciate you letting me be here.

APPENDIX B

Assistant Coach Interview Instrument

## APPENDIX B

### Assistant Coach Interview Instrument

Coach, I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me today and I wanted to assure you of a few things before we begin. I do have your permission to record this interview and I will be recording this interview and transcribing it. When I am finished transcribing this interview I will submit it to you for you to check for the accuracy of your statements. I also would like to reiterate that I am only seeking the good in your program and the things you feel have enabled coach \_\_\_\_\_ and yourself to enjoy success. I also want to make sure that you are aware that this study will use your real name and will identify and describe the school, the setting, and participants by using identifying descriptions and real names. I will not identify any students or minors in the study by name and will use pseudonyms if students are mentioned or observed in the study.

1. Can you tell me a little about where you grew up and about your childhood?  
(Background Question)
2. Can you tell me about your education and where you attended school?  
(Background Question)
3. Can you tell me about your family? (Background Question)
4. Coach can you tell me about your teaching and coaching experience up to this point? (Background Question)
5. Coach, can you tell me to what extent you think coach \_\_\_\_\_ tries to model the behaviors he expects from the coaches and players? (Model the Way)

6. Can you tell me what you feel are the most important behaviors or attributes for a winning coach to possess? (Model the Way)
7. Can you tell me to what extent you think coach \_\_\_\_\_ tries to inspire a shared vision for your coaches and team? (Inspire a Shared Vision)
8. Can you tell me what methods you use to share goals in your program? (Inspire a Shared Vision)
9. Coach, how willing is coach \_\_\_\_\_ to challenge the process or change the way you do things? (Challenge the Process)
10. Can you give me an example of a time when coach \_\_\_\_\_ had to change the methods or routines of the team? (Challenge the Process)
11. How much does coach \_\_\_\_\_ delegate in the operation of the football program? (Enable Others to Act)
12. Can you give me an example of what coach \_\_\_\_\_ does to enable others to act and take ownership of the program? (Enables Others to Act)
13. Coach how much does coach \_\_\_\_\_ use encouragement of individuals in his coaching practice? (Encourage the Heart)
14. How important is team building and building a sense of community to your team's success? (Encourage the Heart)
15. Can you describe any unique traditions that are present here at the school that you feel have assisted you in your winning tradition? (Research Question)

16. Why do you feel that coach \_\_\_\_\_ has been able to win so many games? (Research Question)

17. Is there anything else that you would like to add or tell me today?

Coach, I would really like to thank you for your time today and truly appreciate you letting me be here.

APPENDIX C:  
Former Player Interview Instrument

## APPENDIX C:

### Former Player Interview Instrument

I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me today and I wanted to assure you of a few things before we begin. I do have your permission to record this interview and I will be recording this interview and transcribing it. When I am finished transcribing this interview I will submit it to you for you to check for the accuracy of your statements. I also would like to reiterate that I am only seeking the good in the program and the things you feel have enabled coach \_\_\_\_\_ to enjoy success. I also want to make sure that you are aware that this study will use your real name and will identify and describe the school, the setting, and participants by using identifying descriptions and real names. I will not identify any students or minors in the study by name and will use pseudonyms if students are mentioned or observed in the study.

1. Can you tell me a little about where you grew up and about your childhood? (Background Question)
2. Can you tell me about your education and where you attended school? (Background Question)
3. Can you tell me about your family? (Background Question)
4. Coach can you tell me where you work or if you are in school? (Background Question)
5. Can you tell me to what extent you think coach \_\_\_\_\_ tries to model the behaviors he expects from his coaches and players? (Model the Way)

6. Can you tell me what you feel are the most important behaviors or attributes for a winning coach to possess? (Model the Way)
7. Can you tell me to what extent you think coach \_\_\_\_\_ tries to inspire a shared vision the coaches and the team? (Inspire a Shared Vision)
8. Can you tell me, if you remember, what methods coach \_\_\_\_\_ used to share the goals of the program when you were a part of it? (Inspire a Shared Vision)
9. How willing was coach \_\_\_\_\_ to challenge the process or change the way he did things? (Challenge the Process)
10. Can you give me an example of a time when coach \_\_\_\_\_ had to change the methods or routines of the team? (Challenge the Process)
11. How much does coach \_\_\_\_\_ delegate in the operation of the football program? (Enable Others to Act)
12. Can you give me an example of what coach \_\_\_\_\_ does to enable others to act and take ownership of the program? (Enables Others to Act)
13. How much does coach \_\_\_\_\_ use encouragement of individuals in his coaching practice? (Encourage the Heart)
14. When you were in the program, how important was team building and building a sense of community to the team's success? (Encourage the Heart)



15. Can you describe any unique traditions that are present here at the school that you feel have assisted the team in its winning tradition? (Research Question)

16. Why do you feel that coach \_\_\_\_\_ has been able to win so many games? (Research Question)

17. Is there anything else that you would like to add or tell me today?

I would really like to thank you for your time today and truly appreciate you letting me be here.

APPENDIX D:

Table 2

Georgia High School Football Coaches with 200 Wins Over Career

APPENDIX D:

Table 2  
*Georgia High School Football Coaches with 200 Wins Over Career*

| Coach               | Record     | Winning % | Active/Retired         |
|---------------------|------------|-----------|------------------------|
| Campbell, Larry     | 477-85-3   | 0.847     | Retired                |
| Davis, Robert       | 352-74-1   | 0.826     | Retired                |
| Chadwick, Alan      | 350-67-0   | 0.839     | The Marist School      |
| Pitts, Dan          | 346-109-4  | 0.758     | Retired                |
| Hochstetler, Dwight | 345-114-1  | 0.751     | Manchester/Asst. Coach |
| Hester, Barney      | 334-162-9  | 0.670     | Howard H.S.            |
| Jones, Ronnie       | 329-114-3  | 0.741     | Retired                |
| Welsh, Luther       | 323-162-5  | 0.664     | Retired                |
| Chappell, Bill      | 317-74-9   | 0.804     | Retired                |
| McFerrin, Tom 'T'   | 317-84-4   | 0.788     | Retired                |
| Creel, Wayman       | 312-106-14 | 0.738     | Retired                |
| Hyder, Nick         | 302-48-5   | 0.858     | Retired                |
| Walker, Rodney      | 300-141-3  | 0.679     | Retired                |
| Herron, Jeff        | 287-52-0   | 0.847     | Retired                |
| Henderson, Billy    | 285-107-16 | 0.718     | Retired                |
| Hixon, Graham       | 277-95-16  | 0.735     | Retired                |
| Godfrey, Buck       | 273-89-1   | 0.753     | Retired                |
| McWhorter, Rich     | 271-72-2   | 0.788     | Charlton County        |
| Cravey, John 'Buck' | 270-126-4  | 0.680     | Retired                |
| Bazemore, Wright    | 264-50-7   | 0.833     | Retired                |
| Grisham, Charlie    | 261-69-13  | 0.780     | Retired                |
| Nix, Conrad         | 260-65-0   | 0.800     | Retired                |
| Winslette, Charlie  | 260-134-3  | 0.659     | Retired                |
| Gruhn, Bobby        | 254-104-5  | 0.707     | Retired                |
| Hill, John          | 254-89-5   | 0.737     | Retired                |
| Pilcher, Ed         | 250-116-1  | 0.683     | Retired                |
| Lamb, Ray           | 249-103-11 | 0.701     | Retired                |
| Collins, Rodney     | 247-162-5  | 0.603     | Retired                |
| Hughes, Tim         | 247-102-5  | 0.705     | Retired                |
| Tomberlin, Rick     | 246-119-0  | 0.674     | Retired                |
| Lowe, Allen         | 244-119-3  | 0.671     | Retired                |
| Davidson, Charlie   | 238-102-14 | 0.692     | Retired                |
| Dorsey, Jimmy       | 236-79-1   | 0.748     | Retired                |
| Walsh, Jim Sr       | 234-113-6  | 0.671     | Retired                |
| Lofton, Jim         | 233-123-8  | 0.651     | Retired                |
| Williams, Dale      | 230-122-3  | 0.652     | Retired                |
| Murdock, Bill       | 228-114-5  | 0.664     | Terrell Academy        |
| Sharp, Jerry        | 227-102-9  | 0.685     | Retired                |
| Cronic, Danny       | 222-114-1  | 0.660     | Retired                |
| Miller, Bruce       | 221-119-0  | 0.650     | Gainesville H.S.       |
| Teague, Rayvan      | 220-69-1   | 0.760     | Retired                |
| Earwood, Mike       | 216-114-1  | 0.654     | Retired                |

Table 2 *cont.*

*Georgia High School Football Coaches with 200 Wins Over Career (cont.)*

| <u>Coach</u>    | <u>Record</u> | <u>Winning %</u> | <u>Active/Retired</u> |
|-----------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Reaves, Al      | 216-160-5     | 0.573            | Retired               |
| Schofill, Bill  | 216-139-4     | 0.607            | Retired               |
| Gartrell, Ron   | 213-113-0     | 0.653            | Stephenson H.S.       |
| Griffith, Bob   | 213-111-1     | 0.657            | Retired               |
| Cavan, Jim      | 211-125-22    | 0.620            | Retired               |
| Lamb, Hal       | 211-50-0      | 0.808            | Calhoun H.S.          |
| Wood, Dexter    | 210-52-2      | 0.799            | Retired               |
| Miller, Milt    | 209-93-0      | 0.692            | Retired               |
| Johnson, French | 207-105-11    | 0.658            | Retired               |
| Herndon, Bob    | 204-130-3     | 0.610            | Retired               |
| Bass, Max       | 203-103-7     | 0.660            | Retired               |
| Sellers, Wayman | 203-142-8     | 0.586            | Retired               |

*Note.* Only coaches with 200 wins or more are included. Active coaches are noted by the high school where they are currently employed for the 2017-18 school year. Adapted from The Georgia High School Football Historians Association website:  
<http://ghsfha.org/coaches.php>

APPENDIX E:

Letter to Participant Head Coaches

APPENDIX E:

Letter to Participant Head Coaches

May 1, 2017

Dear Coach,

My name is Bob Schweizer and I am conducting research for my dissertation in Educational Leadership at Valdosta State University. I am currently the head golf coach, head freshman football coach, and athletic director at Troup County High School in LaGrange, Georgia.

In the next week I will be calling you to ask for your participation in a study of the most successful active head football coaches in the state of Georgia. My study will entail observing two days of preseason practice/workouts and interviewing an assistant coach in your program, a former player, and yourself. I will attempt to keep the interviews to less than one half hour and will not interfere in any manner with practice or workouts.

I will only be looking for your unique philosophies and techniques. In the study I want to establish what it takes to be a successful high school football coach in the state of Georgia.

Coach, thank you for your valuable time and I hope you consider being part of this exciting study!

Sincerely,

Robert W. Schweizer  
Athletic Director  
Troup County High School  
Doctoral Candidate in Educational Leadership  
Valdosta State University  
rwschweizer@valdosta.edu  
cell 706-402-8700

APPENDIX F:  
IRB Informed Consent and Approval

## APPENDIX F:

### IRB Informed Consent and Approval

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#### VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

##### Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled “Coaching Winners; A Case Study of Three of the Winningest High School Football Coaches in Georgia.” This research project is being conducted by *Robert Schweizer*, a *doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Department* at Valdosta State University. The researcher has explained to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask the researcher any questions you have to help you understand this project and your possible participation in it. A basic explanation of the research is given below. Please read this carefully and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have. The University asks that you give your signed agreement if you wish to participate in this research project.

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**Purpose of the Research:** This study involves research. The purpose of the study is to determine the attributes that successful high school football coaches in the state of Georgia share.

**Procedures:** You will be interviewed about yourself or a head high school football coach you know or work with. Interviews will last approximately 30 minutes. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. A copy of the transcribed interview will be provided to you after the interview so you may check for the accuracy of your statements or clarify any items you would like to address. There are no alternatives to the experimental procedures in this study. The only alternative is to choose not to participate at all.

**Possible Risks or Discomfort:** Although there are no known risks associated with these research procedures, it is not always possible to identify all potential risks of participating in a research study. However, the University has taken reasonable safeguards to minimize potential but unknown risks. By agreeing to participate in this research project, you are not waiving any rights that you may have against Valdosta State University for injury resulting from negligence of the University or its researchers.

**Potential Benefits:** Although you may not benefit directly from this research, your participation will help the researcher gain additional understanding of successful high school football coaching in the state of Georgia. Knowledge gained may contribute to addressing societal issues such as race, poverty, and access to higher education.

**Costs and Compensation:** There are no costs to you and there is no compensation (no money, gifts, or services) for your participation in this research project.

**Assurance of Confidentiality:** Valdosta State University and the researcher will keep your information confidential to the extent allowed by law. Members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), a university committee charged with reviewing research to ensure the rights and welfare of research participants, may be given access to your confidential information. Your personal information such as phone number and address will not be shared with anyone or included in the study. In an effort to authenticate the real life application of the coaching practice of each head coach participant, the study will use real names and general background







**APPROVAL:** This research protocol is **approved** as presented. If applicable, your approved consent form(s), bearing the IRB approval stamp and protocol expiration date, will be mailed to you via campus mail or U.S. Postal Service unless you have made other arrangements with the IRB Administrator. Please use the stamped consent document(s) as your copy master(s). Once you duplicate the consent form(s), you may begin participant recruitment. **Please see Attachment 1 for additional important information for researchers.**

**COMMENTS:**

- Participants must be informed as to the importance of their names being included in the research study.

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## NEW PROTOCOL REVIEW REPORT

### Attachment 1

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR RESEARCHERS:

If your protocol received expedited approval, it was reviewed by a two-member team, or, in extraordinary circumstances, the Chair or the Vice-Chair of the IRB. Although the expeditors may approve protocols, they are required by federal regulation to report expedited approvals at the next IRB meeting. At that time, other IRB members may express any concerns and may occasionally request minor modifications to the protocol. In rare instances, the IRB may request that research activities involving participants be halted until such modifications are implemented. Should this situation arise, you will receive an explanatory communiqué from the IRB.

Protocol approvals are generally valid for one year. In rare instances, when a protocol is determined to place participants at more than minimal risk, the IRB may shorten the approval period so that protocols are reviewed more frequently, allowing the IRB to reassess the potential risks and benefits to participants. The expiration date of your protocol approval is noted on the approval form. You will be contacted no less than one month before this expiration date and will be asked to either submit a final report if the research is concluded or to apply for a continuation of approval. It is your responsibility to submit a continuation request in sufficient time for IRB review before the expiration date. If you do not secure a protocol approval extension prior to the expiration date, you must stop all activities involving participants (including interaction, intervention, data collection, and data analysis) until approval is reinstated.

Please be reminded that you are required to seek approval of the IRB before amending or altering the scope of the project or the research protocol or implementing changes in the approved consent process/forms. You are also required to report to the IRB, through the Office of Sponsored Programs & Research Administration, any unanticipated problems or adverse events that become apparent during the course or as a result of the research and the actions you have taken.

Please refer to the IRB website

(<http://www.valdosta.edu/ospra/HumanResearchParticipants.shtml>) for additional information about Valdosta State University's human protection program and your responsibilities as a researcher.

## APPENDIX G

Follow Up Interview Instrument  
Head Coach Alan Chadwick, The Marist School

## APPENDIX G

### Follow Up Interview Instrument Head Coach Alan Chadwick, The Marist School

Coach, I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me today and I wanted to assure you of a few things before we begin. I do have your permission to record this interview and I will be recording this interview and transcribing it. When I am finished transcribing this interview I will submit it to you for you to check for the accuracy of your statements. I also want to make sure that you are aware that this study will use your real name and will identify and describe the school, the setting, and participants by using identifying descriptions and real names. I will not identify any students or minors in the study by name and will use pseudonyms if students are mentioned or observed in the study.

1. You mentioned in our first visit that that team unity was the most important aspect for success of your football team. Can you point to some specific things you try to do to build team unity and a sense of brotherhood on the team? Does going to camp help in this bonding?
2. You also mentioned that there was a spiritual aspect to the team at Marist. You all go to mass together and have a mass before each game. Do you think this helps the team bond?
3. You refuse to issue single digit numbers to players. Can you elaborate on the rationale behind this decision and when you started this policy?
4. You also emphasized that the coaches and players need to have a strong work ethic and be dedicated. How important is work ethic to the success of the team?

5. Both Coach Euart and you said that your teams need to be more physical than other teams and you place a priority on being physical. What brought you to this realization and what do you do specifically to ensure that your teams are going to play a physical style of football?
6. You have a standard system of offense that you have been running since you got to Marist in 1976. Why does this offense work for your teams? Will you ever change?
7. One of the things that you mentioned is that being organized helps the team focus and limits distractions. Can you elaborate how this attention to detail helps you and the team focus on the task at hand?
8. Can you explain what the blue hat means and what playing for the blue hat means to you?
9. Can you explain the long blue line and what that means to you?
10. You also stated that if you have had any success it was because you have had smart kids here who play for each other. What role does academics play at Marist? How does the intense academics of the school affect what you do on the football team?
11. Is there anything else or any advice that you would give a new head high school football coach or any wisdom that you can pass on?

Coach, thanks so much for taking the time today to speak with me. I really appreciate your willingness to participate in the study and pass on your knowledge and help others who want to help young people be successful.

APPENDIX H

Follow Up Interview Instrument  
Head Coach Rich McWhorter, Charlton County High School

## APPENDIX H

### Follow Up Interview Instrument Head Coach Rich McWhorter, Charlton County High School

Coach, I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me today and I wanted to assure you of a few things before we begin. I do have your permission to record this interview and I will be recording this interview and transcribing it. When I am finished transcribing this interview I will submit it to you for you to check for the accuracy of your statements. I also want to make sure that you are aware that this study will use your real name and will identify and describe the school, the setting, and participants by using identifying descriptions and real names. I will not identify any students or minors in the study by name and will use pseudonyms if students are mentioned or observed in the study.

1. You mentioned in our first visit that a lot of the unity on your team happens almost naturally because many of the players are related to one another. You also mentioned that team unity was an important aspect for success of your football team. Can you point to some specific things you try to do to build team unity and a sense of brotherhood on the team? Does going to camp help in this bonding?
2. You mentioned that integrity and honesty are some of the key components to be an effective coach? Can you elaborate how this is conveyed to the athletes?
3. You have maintained high expectations over all these years. How do you reinforce these expectations



4. You also emphasized that the coaches and players need to have a strong work ethic and be dedicated. How important is work ethic to the success of the team?
5. I noticed that both you and Marist have very physical practices? How important is it to emphasize being physical? How many days would you say you tackle to the ground in practice?
6. Coach you said that the community is very important to the program? How important is football in Folkston?
7. Coach you said you have a very intense off season weightlifting program? How important is the off season conditioning program to the success of the team?
8. You said you have some routines you do before each game. Do you think it is important to stick to a routine?
9. You also stated that if you have had any success it was because you have had good players and good assistant coaches? Why do think there is so many good football players per capita in Folkston, GA?
10. Is there anything else or any advice that you would give a new head high school football coach or any wisdom that you can pass on?

Coach, thanks so much for taking the time today to speak with me. I really appreciate your willingness to participate in the study and pass on your knowledge and help others who want to help young people be successful.