

On Hanging Up The Whistle...

Last night was an evening I will remember fondly for the rest of my life. A very good sized crowd of people, including family members, close friends, colleagues and folks who have been loyal fans to Roncalli Football for many years gathered to celebrate my retirement from coaching, the last 27 years of which have been as the Head Football Coach at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis. During my time at Roncalli, I have been truly blessed to work with awesome young men from amazing families, as well as being able to coach with some outstanding men as fellow coaches, all of whom were coaching for the right reasons. I know I will consider each of them always to be profound blessings in my life, and I was happy I was able to share these thoughts with them last night, as well as acknowledge family members and others to whom I am so grateful.

Joe Hollowell, who I had coached with many years ago at Roncalli and is now the President of the school, worked very hard and did an outstanding job organizing the celebration. After a very nice pre-meal prayer given by Patty Stephenson, mother of three former players, we enjoyed a wonderful dinner. Afterwards, Bill Kuntz, who was Roncalli's Head Coach when Joe and I coached together, and who brought me to Roncalli originally as an assistant coach, was the emcee for the evening, and did an awesome job of sharing stories and introducing each of the speakers. There were two fellow coaches, and three former players who were asked to speak, and they all did a wonderful job describing their time with the football program, and the positive influence I had on their lives. Their words touched my heart deeply, and made me very proud that perhaps I played a role in their development into the fine gentlemen they have all become. My family created a video with music, filled with football and family pictures over the years, and it brought tears to my eyes! No doubt, I will watch this video numerous times for many years to come. Father John Hollowell, who had played for us in the late 1990's, put together a football highlight video with music that was shown that featured highlight plays from each of the 7 State Championship seasons I was blessed to be a part of during my years as Roncalli's Head Coach. Obviously, it brought back many wonderful memories, and I am so thankful that Fr. John took the time to create such a memorable keepsake! After the program, I was able to greet many of the folks who were in attendance, and was very touched that so many would take the time to be there, and stay around afterwards to visit. Overall, it was just a wonderful evening and created great memories I will cherish always. I am so grateful to Joe for his efforts to put this all together.

I was the last speaker of the evening, and shared the "10 Things I Will Miss Most about Football", as well as my "5 Most Memorable Moments" during my time as a Head Football Coach. Reflecting on these I shared how much I will miss the excitement created by high school football, and how this excitement permeated all aspects of my family's life. I also

shared how much I will miss working with such amazing young men, as well as the great men with whom I was blessed to coach, and that perhaps what I will miss most of all is watching each new class of freshmen boys develop over four years into young men...physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Watching them all take steps toward becoming the young men God created them to be was at the same time humbling and extremely rewarding. These are memories I will cherish always!

Finally, I shared that among other things, a coach's influence is reciprocal. In other words, whatever good is gained by the young people who are being coached comes right back to the coach, often many times over! The more I talked to our players about working hard each day to make their parents proud, the more I found myself working hard to make my own parents proud that I am their son. The more I preached to them the importance of one day being devoted and faithful husbands to their future wives and strong and loving fathers to their children, the more I wanted to love my wife and live my life in a way to make my children proud that I am their father. Without question, as I spoke with our players daily about making the most of their God-given talents and abilities to make Him proud of their efforts, the more I came to realize that I have a duty and obligation each day to make the most of my gifts from God to be a positive influence on others, to remain kind and humble, and to strive each day to live my life in a way that is pleasing to Him! In short, the life lessons on which I put such an emphasis with our players throughout my coaching career became guidelines by which I should live my own life. Looking back on it now, I am no doubt a better man because of my 37 years as an educator, and the young people with whom I was blessed to teach and coach over the years had a very profound and positive influence on my life in return. Over the past 27 years, it has been a privilege and an honor to teach and coach at Roncalli High School, there are so many wonderful people there, and I will miss them. In many ways is it difficult to say goodbye to a wonderful place that I love and have poured my heart and soul into for over a quarter of a century. Although I will miss Roncalli, all of its' wonderful people and the game of football, God has blessed my life abundantly... for that I am forever grateful... my heart is full!! I truly am very thankful, and I am excited about beginning this next stage of my life where I will have new and bigger opportunities to do God's work! I will continue to give my best so that I might make Him proud in the process!!