



## MR. FRANK

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Coach Dunn had just said a lot of good things, but it seemed that Mr. Frank had something to share and Coach Dunn never missed an opportunity to let Mr. Frank speak and share some insights. He often asked Mr. Frank to say a few words. He and Mr. Frank had developed quite a feel for one another through the years. Mr. Frank always seemed to have perfect timing as he shared just the right insight.

Coach Dunn trusted Mr. Frank implicitly. Before becoming a bus driver, Mr. Frank had been a policeman, firefighter, and even a truck driver with over a million miles driven without so much as a speeding ticket or a fender bender. He had even served humbly in local politics for many years. Even though he was getting up there in years, Mr. Frank still volunteered with little league baseball and was involved in many civic organizations. His life had been all about making good decisions and helping others. Mr. Frank was full of wisdom and Coach Dunn never questioned his intentions or agenda.

“Sure, Mr. Frank. I’m betting that half of these guys have already stopped listening to what I was saying, anyway. Maybe they’ll listen to you.”

“Oh, I don’t know about that, Coach. I think these fellas know that you’re only saying what you’re saying because you care about them.

You want them to be their best. But as you were talking, I thought of a story I heard years ago that really stuck with me and it might stick with them also.”

Coach Dunn sat down, nodding at Mr. Frank to continue.

“Fellas, I know that the season hasn’t gone quite like you wanted it to go. Some of you might be frustrated with each other, with Coach, or with any number of people or things. I understand being frustrated. But, have any of you ever heard of R.U. Darby?”

Mr. Frank could see a collective shaking of the head back and forth by the 12 Eagles.

“I didn’t think so. R.U. Darby was one of the original San Francisco 49ers. Now, I’m not talking Joe Montana, Jerry Rice, or Jimmy G’s 49ers but the 1800’s prospecting for gold type 49ers. You see, R.U. Darby was from the East Coast but relocated to California during the gold rush of 1849. Day after day, he searched for unfathomable riches. He had all the best equipment but couldn’t seem to find that mother lode. Sure, he found some nuggets here and there, but it wasn’t what he wanted. Finally, he got frustrated because things weren’t going the way he wanted. Do you fellas know what he did when he got frustrated and thought he was just wasting his time?”

“I’m guessing that something probably went his way,” said Bobbi. “Since you’re telling us this story, I’m guessing that he overcame those frustrations. He probably caught a break, found gold, and stopped being frustrated, right Mr. Frank?”

“Good guess, Bobbi, but actually just the opposite happened. When R.U. Darby got frustrated, he quit. He sold his equipment and the rights to the land he was working on to somebody else. Those people immediately went to work on his land and with his equipment. They ended up finding the mother lode of gold just three feet from where R.U. Darby had stopped. He was just three feet away from the goal – and the gold – he had been working toward. He quit too soon. He gave in to his frustrations and quit three feet from riches untold.”

Mr. Frank paused letting the story hang out there for a moment until James broke the silence with a comment that was probably on most of the player's minds.

"Seriously, I wouldn't be able to live with myself if that happened to me. That dude sure messed up."

"You're right, James," Mr. Frank responded. "R.U. Darby sure did mess up. But I remember that story every time I start to get frustrated with how things are going in my life. Every time that I think about quitting or pouting or just getting plain complacent about things, I'm reminded about R.U. Darby. The same applies to basketball. You never know when everything is going to click. You never know when you are going to get your opportunity in practice or a game. You never know when the breaks will start coming your way. But if you quit. If you lose focus. If you allow frustration to overwhelm you, then you'll never be prepared or ready to cash in if and when your reward comes."

"Preach it, Mr. Frank! Say it a little louder for the people in the back," said Brandon.

Raising his voice, Mr. Frank said, "IF YOU QUIT. IF YOU LOSE FOCUS. IF YOU..."

"Mr. Frank. Mr. Frank, I was just messing with you," said Brandon with a slight chuckle. "It's an expression. It's a way of saying you just dropped some truth bombs. I think everyone heard you the first time."

"Oh, okay. I have a hard time keeping up with all these things that you fellas say. Regardless, enough with the talking. We need to get on the road so we can get some food in your bellies."

Coach Dunn always appreciated the insights Mr. Frank provided throughout the years. Mr. Frank always seemed to know just the right thing to say and when to say it. This story about R.U. Darby was no exception. Coach Dunn believed that Mr. Frank had just hit another home run with this story and that it might stick with a couple of the players.

"Sounds good, Mr. Frank. Thanks for sharing."

Turning to the Eagles, Coach Dunn said, “Let’s think about the story Mr. Frank just told us and how it relates to our commitment to our goals and commitment to each other. Also, and guys, please keep the noise to a minimum.”

Mr. Frank checked his mirrors and slowly edge out of the parking lot onto the road. The day had been a tough one already and they still had quite a haul in front of them.