

CHAPTER ONE

The Qualities of a Quarterback

There are specific qualities that a quarterback just must have if he wants to be the best leader and player he can be for his team. I really think that all schools have quarterbacks like this walking the hallways. One of the problems is that we sometimes either look past them or we identify them too late. I hope that this chapter will give you the opportunity to seek them out, find them, identify them early, and get them trained up to have a successful season and career. In this chapter you will find a list of must-have qualities a quarterback needs that goes into detail on the intangibles mentioned in the introduction. By the end of this chapter, you will know what to look for and what to teach your quarterbacks so that you can not only help a young quarterback get better in the game, but also a young man in life.

QUARTERBACK QUALITIES

Strong Work Ethic

This involves striving for perfection in their work. They must have a strong desire to be great, and they have to build consistency through the reps. And that's done through the monotonous drill work.

They must always have a great attitude, not just when things are going well, but especially when things are going tough. They're the first one on the field and last one off. There are always little things that they could be working on. They get on

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the field to warm up before their teammates get on. And then at the end of practice, they usually spend about 10 minutes working on some fine detail. They always give 100%. They understand that just the role that they're in, of being the quarterback in our offense, that the eyes are always on them. So, they must have a strong desire to be the best. They're the most competitive player on the team and they thrive on competition. A lot of times, we don't pay enough attention to their body language, and it is often more important than their verbal communication. As coaches we must pay attention to their body language.

Determined to be the Best

They'll accept nothing less than perfection and victory and they understand that it's the hours of tedious work that get them to that point. They have to put in the work and they have to be dedicated.

They have to be determined and overcome fatigue. They must understand that they're going to be tired and they have to keep working through things and nothing great was ever accomplished without some adversity along the way.

Great Citizenship

What you see is what you get. They have high character on campus, they're terrific kids. They do very well in the classroom and go to class. And off campus, they're always great ambassadors for our football program.

Team Leader

They always think in terms of the team's success. They use our teammates to defeat our opponents. They understand that it's not just them and that they need the other 10 players on the field to be successful.

And that's how they gain the respect of their teammates by playing under pressure and being mentally tough. They thrive when things get tough in the games. They have total control at all times, both mentally and physically. They know the down the distance, the yardage necessary, the field position, the time remaining and the score.

High Confidence

They must have high confidence to be successful both on the field and in the huddle. They have the mental ability through preparation of film study, they do self-analysis, game film, etc. That mental preparation will also make them mentally

tough.

Their physical skills are going to be dynamite because they're going to prepare them through the way that they practice. They have quick feet, speed, quickness, and strength. They throw the football accurately with good velocity and to the proper receiver.

Pre-Snap Preparation

At the end of every play, they're going to understand that they must check the down and distance. They're going to note the time on the clock as the referee marks the ball. They're going to then turn to the sideline for the play.

Approach the line of scrimmage and go through their pre-snap reads. They're going to look left, middle and right to identify where the safeties are. How many are there? What is the front and the depth, eyes, and leverage of the defenders? And what's the front, is it odd or even? How many people are committed to the box?

Great Knowledge of the Offense

They study and learn on the side. There are things that they need to do outside of the hours that we spend on the field. They have to spend time off the field putting the work in. They have to understand how to attack both fronts and coverages. And understand both the strengths and weaknesses before we even get to our own plays.

These are things that they have to understand about how defenses work. They have to completely understand our offense, the philosophy of our offense, the strengths and the potential weaknesses of the things that we're doing. With every strength, there's some weaknesses involved as well. They have to understand our formations, our blocking scheme, our pass structures, and the types of reads that they're applying.

They have to understand the play and the purpose of the play. They are the guardians of every play. In order for the play to be successful, they have to have the ability for that play to move the chains in some way. We want to be able to get positive yardage. We want to be able to have a chance to run that play. Part of being the guardian of the play is that they have to understand that every series that we finish, we want to finish with a special teams play, even if it's a punt (which is always better than a turn-over).

Great Footwork

Our quarterbacks have to have great footwork. They don't necessarily have to be an incredible athlete, but they have to have great feet because it will give them pocket presence. Being a great athlete obviously helps but having great feet to move in the pocket like Big Ben and Dan Marino would be shining examples of that.

They have to understand that their drop always ties in with the route and the protection that are being used. We have various drops that we'll use, and they will always tie in with that pass concept. In our quick game concept for an example, our quarterbacks will use a drop that we call tap tap, it's a two step drop, that when their back foot hits the ground, the ball is either coming out on rhythm, or they're going to use what we call a "hang step" which is a slight pause before throwing.

Understand that the Ball is the Program

They're always working on the quarterback center exchange both under center and in gun. They put pressure from the bottom hand through the top hand, they understand that the ball to the third hand: the ball comes to your stomach.

Handoffs are always clean and consistent. They'll put the ball to the belly, and they'll get their eyes at ball level when working their handoffs. And that means that they are looking the ball into that pocket to their running back when they are executing the handoffs.

Their passes are always in a clear lane. And they also understand that they can move on to the next best thing with their passes.

The quarterback must be mistake proof. There's four elements that are going to make the quarterback tough to stop in a team and an unbeatable force. In being mistake proof having the ability to take care of the football is:

Ball security: We don't want fumbles or interceptions. Quarterback touching the ball every play plays a huge part in that.

Down preparation: Clears up post-snap process.

Understanding situational football: how to move those chains.

Great footwork: in both in the pocket and with what they do will will make us mistake proof.

TEACHING GREAT QUARTERBACKING

To be an outstanding quarterback as outlined above, there are 10 points of em-

phasis that you need to be coaching, teaching, and paying attention to. We want our quarterbacks to be a battlefield commander, NOT a celebrity. These coaching points below are meant to help you focus on the important details that will help your quarterback become like a battlefield commander while applying the qualities listed above.

Ignore the Noise

They don't focus outside opinion. They can block outside opinion, because at the end of the day, the only opinions that matter are the ones of the critique and the coaching that are done by those within the football program. They don't get caught up with their press clippings. They can ignore negative remarks from fans. We always tell them that fans will always be way off by giving too much credit or not enough credit. That credit should always be shared with your teammates.

Have Fun

You have to REALLY love the game, you have to love doing what you're doing, you have to love practice as much, if not more than playing the games. But don't be a clown by messing around at practice. True competitors really love the practice and the preparation that's involved.

Know Your Job

You have to be a master technician. You have to have a great understanding of all the details involved of being not only a great quarterback, but being able to be successful with the play that is signalled in. The greatest quarterbacks have football on their brain. Outside of practice, they're thinking of the schemes and the concepts that we run and how to tweak them or dress them up in different ways. And having ideas in their mind of being able to apply those concepts in different ways. It is terrific when you get a young man that's thinking along those lines, rather than just being a robot out there.

Know Your Teammates

A great quarterback has to know their players in the offense. They have to have a true knowledge of each guy, both their strengths and their limitations. They also need to know what makes each guy tick. This allows them have the ability to make each player in the offense feel valued and understand that they're all a big part of our offense.

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Be Consistent

They're never way too up or too down. Whether they've scored the biggest touchdown and the most important touchdown of the game, or they've just thrown what could be a costly interception.

They should always be like a duck. They're always working but they look calm and relaxed. If you see a duck on top of the water, they look very graceful. But if you looked underwater and had a camera to see their feet, their feet would be flapping 100 miles an hour.

Be Smart with the Ball

They understand the defense that they're attacking. They also understand our reads and how to apply those reads to the play that we called. They have great anticipation. Great quarterbacks don't necessarily have to have these incredible arms. Strong arms do help at times, but it's more important to be able to anticipate that receiver coming open and getting the ball out early. They understand that it's important to live to see another down which in a lot of cases means that it's okay to throw the ball away.

Score Touchdowns

It's very important to finish every series with a special teams play. Worst case scenario, the special teams play that we would be finishing with would be a punt. A punt is always better than putting the ball in your opponent's hands with a turn-over. The next way to get your team in the end zone would be with a field goal. And then obviously, if you're finishing with a PAT or a two point play, that means that you've just scored a touchdown.

Manage the Game

Part of managing the game is always understanding the score, the down and distance, and how much time is left on the clock. He also has to understand how the clock works.

HOW TO SELECT A QUARTERBACK

In high school we identify specific players that are going to play quarterback for us. Most other positions, when young men come up through middle school, we always tell them that you can try for any position that you want on the team, and at the end of the day, the coaches will have the final decision. But we allow players to go

in and try out for a position and a lot of times their body types, their speed, their skill will determine the position that's best suited for them. But with the quarterbacks, we try to identify them as early as possible. We go to the youth games and seek kids in the community that are playing other sports. We try to identify somebody that we think is going to fit into that quarterback mold as we see it in our football program. We also try to start working with them as early as possible. One of the things with our Quarterback Academy is that we work with young players and high school players during the offseason. We get players from our own program, as well as players coming from other programs. A lot of cases, we'll have kids that we've worked with for a number of years before they start to even enter high school which will put them ahead of the curve.

One of the most important traits to look for is a competitor. We want the people that are playing quarterback in our program to be UBER competitive. They need to hate to lose more than they love to win. We want players that have great grades, they take care of business in the classroom. I've always believed that if you aren't taking care of business in the classroom, it starts to affect the way that you're going to play football because it's hard to play football when you have other challenges, such as not getting homework done, borderline failing classes. It's hard to be focused on football if you haven't taken care of all those "little things." And in most cases, grades are going to get you further in life than football will. So, we want them to be successful in the classroom. They're the kind of guy that makes good decisions when they're with their friends. They're going to be the leader. They're going to be the guy who helps their friends out and maybe keep some of their teammates from venturing off that path and keeping them on the straight and narrow.

And then ultimately, the Head Coach in the program will make the decision on the athletes that are going to play quarterback at every level in the program. Usually at the freshmen level, and sub-varsity, it just requires a stamp of approval. Our coaches do a great job of selection when we start our off-season workouts, especially at the freshmen level. I'll always know who's playing quarterback at all the levels in our program and like I said, it's the only position in the entire program that is not open for tryouts. And we'll make all the decisions on who's going to work out at the quarterback position.

Our Kind of Guy

Expounding on the type of players that we want as our quarterback; we always tell them we need “Our Kind of Guy” (OKG).

CHARACTER: Having somebody who plays quarterback that has high character, they do the right thing in public and private. They’re not a different person when they’re out with friends than they are with their teammates or their family. What you see is what you get, they live in truth. They’re great people and they are low maintenance.

ACADEMICS: Academics are important to them. They want to learn, they want to graduate, they compete in the classroom, just like they do on the field. And the number one competition is with themselves. They want to try to do better than they’ve done the day before. And they’re constantly trying to be the best student that they can be.

INTANGIBLES: they love football, they love going to practice, they’re competitive. They’re driven to be great. They are physically and mentally tough, emotionally stable. They’re super coachable, and they’re all about the team. As great as the statistics can be. The most important statistic for them is in the win column. It’s not how many attempts and completions they had, it’s not the yards that they threw or the touchdown to interception ratio. It’s ultimately moving the chains putting the team in the end zone and winning games and being there for their teammates.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, your quarterback needs to be a specific type of person. As you have read, not everyone is a quarterback and we don’t hold tryouts for this position. The player must be a stand up guy who you can trust to lead your team when it gets tough out there on the field. The process that follows in the rest of this book will cover a lot of the physical and mental development as it relates to playing the game, but all the information in this chapter might be the most important. When you have a player that holds these qualities, you have a great chance at having an elite quarterback.