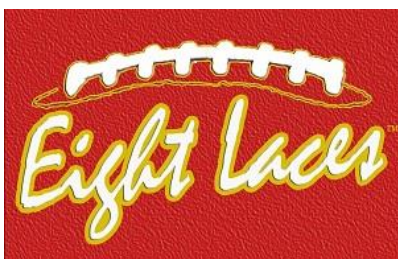


# **“AN INSIDER’S GUIDE TO SCORING YOUR NEXT COACHING JOB”**

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## **SO YOU WANT TO LEAVE; NOW WHAT?**

I was on [Episode 72](#) of the [Football Coaching Podcast](#) with [Joe Daniel](#) in October 2013 regarding how to handle your business as a coach when you know you are leaving. I thought it would be good timing to post this information now. I encourage you to listen the podcast. In fact, if you haven't seen Coach Daniel's podcast, check it out. There is a TON of information on there. As of today, Fall of 2013, there are [SEVENTY THREE podcasts available](#) to check out!

I have been in this situation before. I was the Athletic Director and Head Football Coach at Capistrano Valley Christian in Orange County, California. They were in the playoffs quite frequently in the late 90s, early 2000s. A solid program here in Southern California in the Small Schools Division. Then, their Head Coach left, and they fell off. I got an email in 2006 asking if I was interested in coming over to talk about their job. I said yes.

There were 240 kids in the school my first year there. They were 0-10 the year before I got there, we went 5-5 my first year there; we lost TWO games on the last play of the game. It was a GREAT turnaround season.

Then, 2008 hit us. ***Private schools in America took a HUGE HIT!!*** We lost a lot of kids during my five years there; from 240 to 170! As I saw this declining enrollment starting and less and less kids numbers to pull from, I saw the program going downhill fast. So, I started looking around. So, I share these keys from experience, my own and friends of mine

**Keep doing the best job you can.**

Don't cut the kids short, don't cut your staff short. Sometimes when you know you aren't going to be around, your attention to detail can slip. What does this say about you though? What does it say about you as a professional if you have one foot out of the door? Your program deserves your best even if you want to leave, or need to leave, etc.

If you stop doing your best, and then end up leaving, the kids, the parents, administrators, boosters, etc. will end up looking back and saying to themselves: "I knew he was leaving, he wasn't committed to this job, I saw it." Even if they didn't, they will find things to pick apart. You don't want to leave a school on those terms. Those ideas will spread, and might end of following you, hurting your reputation, etc.

**Keep it quiet.**

If you start telling anyone that you are thinking of leaving, or that you are going to leave, this can change people's perspective of you. They might even start seeing things that ARE NOT there. Why do that to yourself? Why do that to the other coaches in your program? It's best to just keep this to yourself. The worst thing that can happen is the head coach, or the athletic director if you are the head coach, hears that you are looking around elsewhere. What will that person do then? Will they even keep you around to finish the season? They might not!

The other thing that will happen, and I'm speaking from first-hand experience here, if you start verbalizing you are looking around it can lead to you checking out mentally. You'll start to have that foot out of the door mentally, and start to wane on your job. Once you start telling people you are leaving, your mentality towards the place you are at will change.

It's just human nature to start to distance yourself. My experience is that the more I spoke about leaving, even with my friends who were not there, I started checking out mentally. Then, what happens if you don't find another gig?

Now, you are stuck at a place you wanted to leave, and told people you were going to leave. Not good. I advise you to keep things to yourself.

**Keep a list going of potential jobs.**

Keep your ear and nose to the grindstone. Make a list on your computer, a spreadsheet or whatever way you keep yourself organized. Make a list of the jobs you **want** to go to. Take mental notes of the teams that are doing poor. There might be a change coming! Keep watching that school's job board!

There was a school in my area that was really bad. Had one playoff run in about 8 years. I knew they had great athletes though, because I played them. And I knew that the parents there would not keep taking it. So, I kept an eye on their school's website towards the end of another 1-9 season. Sure enough, two weeks after the season, they posted that they were looking for a new head football coach!

These are just three of the first things that came to my mind when Joe asked me to speak about this topic with him!

## **WHERE TO LOOK FOR A JOB**

This is going to be very different depending on the part of the country you are from. Obviously different states are going to have different websites, job boards, etc. For instance, in California, the top website for jobs in education is edjoin.org. They have thousands of jobs on there. Although they are expanding to other parts of the nation, they aren't there yet. I know that Texas High School Coaches Association has a great website with a job board on it. Obviously, not going to help a coach from Orange City, Iowa who is looking to stay there.

You need to do some networking with coaches in the state where you want to get to. Contact coaches from that state and ask them where you should look. California is broken in to ten "sections." Each "section" in the state has their own website; most of those are going to be the best place to find a coaching job. Most state associations are going to have some sort of job board on them. Most teaching unions from state to state will also have a job board of one kind or another on it.

Another place to look is on national coaching association websites. For instance, years ago I advertised that I was looking for a softball coach on a



national softball coaching association website. Those association websites can be great places to look for a job. Sometimes, they might require that you are a member of that specific organization, and sometimes they will not. It just depends on how it is set up.

A great national website for football coaches, if you have never seen the website, is [footballscoop.com](http://footballscoop.com). This is one of THE best sources in the nation for football jobs. They don't have postings as much as they have announcements about coaches who are leaving, who were fired, etc. Stay on top of this site daily when you are looking for a job. When you see that a coach was fired, or has retired, or whatever, then put that school on your target. Start looking for their job posting to come up.

A great way to stay organized during your job search is on an Excel spreadsheet. This is exactly what I do. Every time I contact a school, I document it. Usually, when you are looking for a job, you are going to be in contact with many, many schools depending on your demographic, what you are looking for, etc.

My spreadsheet looks like this, from left to right:

DATE: SCHOOL NAME: POSITION APPLIED FOR: CONTACT PERSON: THEIR  
POSITION: EMAIL: PHONE NUMBER: RESUME SENT?: APPLICATION DONE?:  
FOLLOW UP EMAIL: FOLLOW UP PHONE CALL: INTERVIEW?: MISC. This is thirteen  
categories from the left to the right. 13 columns to help organize myself.

When I hear back from the school, I document that under MISC. If the school doesn't hire me, or I don't get an interview, or what have you, I just color that whole line **RED**. I do this so that I don't come back to this organization during this search. You could also totally delete them. What I don't like about that is what if they reopen the job? That has happened to me before, not often, but it has. Then all of my documentation with them is gone.

I'm not going to list the websites that are specific to certain states. However, here is a list of national websites to help you in your search process:

[www.footballscoop.com](http://www.footballscoop.com) – national website with coaching job information

[www.afca.com](http://www.afca.com) – American Football Coaches Association – has a job board

[www.acsiglobal.org](http://www.acsiglobal.org) – Association of Christian Schools International; has a job board

[www.naia.org](http://www.naia.org) – National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics; has a job board

[www.d2football.com](http://www.d2football.com) – For NCAA Division 2 football; has a job board

[www.teamworkonline.com](http://www.teamworkonline.com) – Has job postings for many different athletic organizations

[www.nacada.com](http://www.nacada.com) – National Association of Collegiate Athletic Directors Association; has a job board for all different college openings

## **HIRING COACHES:**

### **ONE OF THE BEST PARTS OF BEING AN ATHLETIC DIRECTOR**

One of the topics I get asked a lot about from visitors to my blog, in fact three coaches just this past week, is about the hiring process. "What are you looking for in a head coach, from your perspective as an AD?" Or "What kind of advice can you give me about finding a football job?" So, I've decided to write this mini-series on this exact topic: **how I go about hiring coaches, and my advice to coaches looking for a job.**

I'm a "rookie" AD in many aspects. I've only been in the seat for six years. I am one of 6,000 Athletic Directors nationwide who has earned the Certified Athletic Administrator credential from the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators' Association; and I do have my Masters Degree in Athletic Administration. I'm saying that to tell you I've done my homework! Some ADs out there haven't; they are former coaches who are filling a seat, and some of them do a great job. Then, you have what I call "career ADs." ***These are the guys who have studied the profession, and are always looking for ways to become better leaders professionally.*** I count myself in the latter category.

**I've hired 26 head coaches over the span of my 6 year Athletic Director career.** (This is at two different schools.) When I took over at Capistrano Valley Christian on July 1, 2007, I immediately had to find three head coaches! Talk about getting thrown in to the lion's den right away!

I've hired head varsity coaches for the following sports: Cross Country (2), Boys Basketball (4), Girls Basketball (2), Boys Soccer (3), Girls Soccer (1), Softball (2), Cheer (3), Golf (2) and Girls Volleyball (2). I've hired four head junior varsity coaches: basketball (1) and football (3). (I've been a Head Football Coach for eight years, so all three JV Head Football Coach hires were when I was the Head Football Coach.)

I've also hired about fifteen assistant varsity and junior varsity football coaches during my eight years as a Head Football Coach. One year, we really expanded our coaching staff, added a JV program. I hired five coaches that season alone. **I interviewed roughly twenty candidates for those five spots.**

Needless to say, **I've done a lot of hiring in my career.** I think it's vital to have a lot of coaches on staff. I'm now the AD at Excelsior Charter School in Victorville. We were lucky enough to add thirteen paid coaching spots to our entire athletic

department this year. It's part of my vision, to have more coaches in our programs. I'm happy that the school administration and board has bought in to that vision. When schools rely on a lot of volunteers, and have their programs understaffed, it's very hard to build competitive teams.

## **CASTING A WIDE NET**

**In my humble opinion, there are two ways to hire a coach: the lazy way, and the right way!** Some Athletic Directors are so overworked by their schools, that they simply don't have the time and energy to do a proper coaching search. They simply want to find a coach, fill the seat and move forward. It is always easy to find a coach to fill a seat. The key thing is finding the RIGHT coach for your kids and your program.

**The first step I take to try to find the RIGHT coach is to cast as wide of a net as possible.** I will usually post the job opening on five to seven internet sites and blogs. I will put it up on the school's Facebook account, the Twitter account, and my own Twitter account. Social media is a great place to advertise jobs. I like to broadcast the job to the local newspapers as well. Sometimes they will run an

ad for you, and sometimes they will not. Always depends on the time of year, and what else is happening.

I found a tremendous soccer coach on Craigslist one year. He had posted his resume on there, and when I searched "soccer coach" on the site, I found his resume. Here is a guy who had college coaching experience, but was looking for a job in our certain part of the county. He did a fine job for us.

**Casting a wide net is important because you just never know who you might find out there.** As a high school Athletic Director, I don't have the luxury of hopping on a private jet and flying around the nation like these college Athletic Directors do! You are mainly stuck to the local city or maybe surrounding cities where you live. If you have ability to connect a full time teaching job, or other job on campus to your coaching position, you are more likely to find a better coach out there. Many times though, at least here in California, we are having to hire walk on coaches only. Therefore, your hands are tied because you have to find a person who is A: an experienced coach and B: has the time to work on this sport even though they have a full time job elsewhere. This is a very unique person you need to find. Therefore, casting a wide net is very important!

## **I want that job! What do I send them?**

### **5 Keys in reaching out to the AD/Search Committee/Principal**

[I have written extensively about the job search process.](#) I don't find a lot of Athletic Directors out there sharing this information, at least not when I was unemployed for the first time in my life at 35. So, I started writing about it. Now, I get calls/emails/pigeons from all over the nation about this process.

You can read my past articles/blogs about your job search [here](#). I've written a lot about your resume and cover letter. One question I get a LOT is:

**"What should I send to the AD/Search Committee/Principal for the Head Football job that opened this week?"**

So, I'll do my best to tackle this question here!

### **5 Keys in reaching out to the AD/Search Committee/Principal**

#### **1. Follow the directions on the job posting/job flyer.**

One thing that has really annoyed me about job searches is when coaches fail to follow the directions on the job posting. My first day ever as an AD, July 1, 2007, I had to launch searches for THREE head coaches! I did NOT want phone



calls. So, I put on the job flyers "No phone calls please." Sure enough, coaches called. If you can't follow this basic instruction on the job flyer, what makes me think you can run a high school varsity program?

If it says "Send Resume and no other materials at this time" then send your resume and no other materials at this time! You don't want to get on the negative side of the AD in just the application process!

## 2. Your Resume

Obviously, you are going to want to send your resume! Again, [I've written a whole lot about athletic resume writing](#), go read that stuff. I'm not going to address the resume much here.

I will say this: I've had job openings with 100 resumes sitting on my desk as an AD. When an AD is looking at 100 resumes, you have about 45-60 seconds to stand out. The means that you really need to evaluate the format of your resume. If you have coached at some GREAT schools, but only have been a position coach, you might want to think about making those schools stick out by **BOLDING AND CAPPING THEM**. If you have had some great titles like **HEAD COACH** or **ATHLETIC DIRECTOR**, you want to bring attention to those things.

Your resume needs to show two very important things: you have made a **DIFFERENCE** where you have been, and that you will bring **VALUE** to the organization. If you are just giving your TITLES and JOB DESCRIPTIONS on your resumes, you will NOT stand out. (I create [custom athletic resumes](#) by the way, [more info here.](#))

**3. Your Cover Letter** *Your cover letter might be more important than your resume!*

As an AD, if I receive both a resume and cover letter attached to an email to me about a job, I always read the cover letter first. This cover letter tells me a lot about you as a communicator. In my opinion, being a great communicator is KEY to being a great coach. If you don't communicate well on paper, it's an indication, just a small one, that you don't communicate well as a coach.

*Your cover letter needs to capture the attention of the search committee/AD in the VERY first paragraph!*

Think about starting with a question to get their attention. Think about starting with a great STAT about you as a coach, something that is great and

UNIQUE to you. Think about starting with your tagline or mission statement or vision for the program you are applying to.

Don't just start with "Hello Sir, my name is Chris Fore and I want to be the next Head Football Coach there at the University of Miami. You will not find a harder worker or a more experience team player than me." This is how 95% of cover letters start! Think outside of the box. I would put 75% of your attention and work in to your first paragraph; it's THAT important.

#### **4. Your Coaching Manual**

I thought that most coaches knew this, but spoke with a few this week that didn't know it would be a good idea to send some sort of Coaching Manual or Coaching Portfolio. I prefer to look at a Portfolio to a manual. The difference is that a Portfolio has your work in it, flyer to parents, calendars, practice schedules, letters in incoming kids, summer calendars, fundraising flyers, etc. etc. etc. A Coaching Manual is more of your philosophy, your vision, your plan of action, etc.

Whichever one you have, maybe it is a combination of the two, send it.

You can send a PDF of it, attach it with your email or online application.

***Personally, I like to send mine through snail mail. The reason I do this is so that***

*the AD or Search Committee has something tangible in their hands to look at.* If

it is just email, it might be hard for an AD to share when the Search Committee gets together to review all of the applications! Most aren't going to print out your 100 page manual. They just won't. But if they have a hard copy of it, they will take it to that Search Committee meeting (hopefully).

Your manual will give the AD/Principal/Search Committee a great picture of how you will run the football program at their school. One coach I know puts their logo on every page that he can in his manual. Nice extra step that I'm sure administrators like to see.

## **5. Letters of Recommendation**

If you see a job that you really want, and there are no limitations on what to send, you want to send 3-4 letters of recommendation along with your email. I've actually followed up a few days after my initial email with some letters of recommendation. This way the AD sees your name again, your name and application are fresh on his mind all of a sudden. Plus, it's not SO much for him to read the first time you introduce yourself.

Who do I get letters from? ***You want to collect as many letters of recommendation as you can.*** Personally, I have about 30 letters of recommendation in my file. I pick and choose which ones to send to which jobs. That's the smart thing to do. For instance, if I'm applying to a Head Football job where the Principal is the point person for the search then I will send some letters from former Principals. If I'm applying to a job where the AD is the point person, I will send ones from ADs who have supervised me. Do some work on the people at your school. Perhaps an AP/VP at the school you're applying to worked with an AD you have worked with. That might be a great letter to send. Know your audience.

I have some letters from parents and players as well. I think these letters are important as well. Depending on the school, the job, I might send a letter from a player or parent as well. Sometimes, I follow up a few weeks after the initial email with a few of these letters as well. Again, just getting my name in front of the AD/Search Committee another time.

## **5 KEYS TO WRITING AN ATHLETIC COVER LETTER**

### *THE 5 "BE" S TO GARNER THE ATTENTION YOU WANT THROUGH A COVER LETTER*

Since [Football Scoop](#) posted [some of my stuff in December of 2012](#), I've been inundated with emails from all over the nation. It's been a joy to help many coaches out with their resumes and cover letters. I've seen some top notch stuff, have stolen some ideas for the future, and have been very impressed with the way some coaches are representing themselves on paper. On the other hand, I've seen some resumes and letters that are not very impressive and simply will not get the attention of Athletic Directors, Principals, Head Football Coaches, etc.

I've had a lot of questions about cover letters so I wanted to put this together to help the coaches who need it. Remember, these are just my ideas, coming from thirteen years in the business, five as an Athletic Director. I've had positions open where I received eighty applicants for a head job. You've got to get the attention of administrators, and it usually starts with your cover letter. How are you going to stand out in that letter to make him/her put you in the INTERVIEW pile? That's the key!

#### **1. BE ORIGINAL!**

This about how to be original with your cover letter. Break tradition from the standard cover letter format you see from advisors online. Heck, break away from the keys I'm going to give you. Yes, there might be a "certain way" to put a cover letter together, but think about looking through 50-100 of the same exact type of cover letters. To be honest, I get bored! They all start looking and sounding the same.

During one week in January of 2013, I looked at about 100 resumes/cover letters. Two coaches sent in cover letters that had a different format. On the left hand side, there was a column that told me a little bit about them in bullet format. I liked that a lot. Again, it was a break from the normal looking cover letter, it got my attention and forced me to read it!

## **2. BE UNIQUE!**

The only person who has had YOUR experience is YOU! Be unique in what you write. Seriously, I could take some cover letters I've seen and just scratch out the schools and years on them and put in the schools where I've worked and changed the years or the schools and years from another coach and it would sound just like him!

What I'm trying to say here is that too many coaches write these very generic sounding letters that aren't very personal or unique. Instead of using a statement like "I'm a passionate football coach" how about a statement like "The passion I have for football envelopes everything I do because I've been so impacted by the sport. I want to share this passion I have with others in a way that they will be impacted by football."

Instead of a statement like "You won't find a harder worker than me" put in a quote from one of your reference letters about your work ethic. I haven't seen one person in the last week use a quote somebody wrote about them in the body of their cover letter. That would be unique to YOU!!

### **3. BE SPECIFIC!**

You need to use specific concrete numbers to grab attention. These numbers need to be stats that show how YOU have made a difference where you coached. For instance, this past year I was the Special Teams Coordinator at the school where I'm also the Athletic Director. We had a kid return four kicks for touchdowns this year, this puts him number three in the National High School Record book for kick returns for a touchdown in eight man football. That's pretty



great. Plus, the head coach told me that they haven't returned a kick for a touchdown in the six years he has been here. We ended up with six returns for touchdowns this year, from zero in the last six years. This would be an important stat to put in to a cover letter. It would get the attention of an Athletic Director or Head Football Coach if I was applying for a Special Teams Coordinator job somewhere else.

In 2006, I took over a program that was 0-10 in 2005. We turned that thing around my first year, went 5-5, lost two games on the last play of the game!! It would be important for me to put something about that in a cover letter for a Head Football Coach job. In fact, we were the ONLY team in the state of California to go from 0-10 to .500! That's a great stat to add to your cover letter. It is a specific stat about my regime at Capo Valley Christian that is impressive.

#### **4. BE QUICK!**

Notice I didn't say be short here. But you must be quick. The people who read these cover letters are busy people. They don't have time to be bored by your cover letter, and they certainly don't have time to read it if it doesn't look and read quick. By look quick, I mean keep your paragraphs short, 6-8 sentences;

not 10-12. This will help to cut up the lengthy look of the letter and encourage them to read it. Notice how I've tried to break up this document.

Did you notice? The attention span of people "ain't what it used to be." So keep things moving quick. Say what you need to say and not a sentence too much! A key to making your letter read quick is by keeping your paragraphs short and to the point. Don't say the same thing three different ways. Do you see what I'm doing here? I've added a few extra sentences here saying the same thing. I've done this on purpose for you to try to understand what I'm saying because I've read a lot of letters where people are redundant! Be brief and move quick!

## **5. BE PERSONABLE!**

I've been telling coaches to try to relate a personal story that takes you off the pages and in to the life of a kid or family that you have had a tremendous impact on, and relate that story in your cover letter. This will help to make you personable; it will help to make you real; and it will help to make you liked by the reader. Remember, they are reading a TON of cover letters. They are making a decision on YOUR future and theirs by reading black and white letters on a piece

of paper. How do YOU jump off that paper and in to their mind? By relating a powerful story.

What better way to do that than by sharing the story of a life YOU helped to influence and change. For instance, this season we had a junior earn the FIRST 2.0 GPA of his life! Why? "Because somebody finally cared" he told me. I was on this kid just about every day of the semester, encouraging him, pushing him. I met with him in my office often to assist him the best way I could. This is a good story to relate.

## **4 PIECES OF ADVICE ABOUT YOUR RESUME**

So, now that I've cast that very wide net, the resumes will start to come in. Personally, I prefer to have coaches send me resumes and some letters of references before filling out the application for the school. It depends on where you work, and if your school will allow that. I've worked at one school that allowed that and one that didn't. No matter the case, I now have a stack of resumes to go through.

### **How do you stick out on paper among all those other resumes?**

One school I applied to in Texas in the Spring of 2012 told me they had close to 250 resumes for their Head Football Coach position! In 2006, there were 105 candidates for a Head Football Coach/Athletic Director position in Carrollton, Texas. I beat out 103 of them, but lost to that 104th! Anyhow, here is some advice on how to make your resume stand out.

I've seen hundreds of resumes for coaching positions in my tenure as an Athletic Director. I would estimate between 600-700 over the course of the last five years; and that's on the conservative side.

## **Number One – Do Your Home Work About The School And The Position**

Your resume should reflect what you have done in your career, BUT it should also reflect the job description of the position you are trying to get. You should have a few different resumes that you can send out to potential employers. For instance, a football coach who is a teacher should have both a “coaching resume” and a “teaching resume.”

To be honest, as an Athletic Director, I want to know about your athletic accomplishments and history. I want to see details about your athletic background that most principals could care less about. For instance, I want to know what the records of the teams you have coached at, how you have developed kids for college, etc. I want to see the differences you made there as a coach. Did you improve the program while you were there? Not just a head coach, but an assistant. As the Special Teams Coordinator, did the Special Teams improve under your leadership? Put that on your resume. But my principal could care less about that; he’s going to want to know how the test scores in your classroom improved!

That's why I believe it is important to cater your resume to the school you are applying to. Know what that school holds near and dear as values, and make sure you highlight that in your first few lines. I'm not saying that you lie to them, never do that obviously! But if the job announcement speaks about wanting a "seasoned coach with a passion for the game of football, yet someone who teaches about character first and foremost," then you should reflect that in your resume, right there at the top of the resume. It could read something like: "Passionate Veteran Coach Who Teaches Character First."

Another piece of advice regarding doing your homework about the position and school. I had a really horrible year as a football coach one year, 0-10. It was miserable. Two weeks after the season, I get this large packet from a coach, with a cover letter addressed to me, the Athletic Director. The letter was about how he saw that we were 0-10, and that any good AD worth a darn would surely fire that coach, and change out the leadership. This guy claimed to be the answer to the problem, and he would surely turn the program around. "When you fire your coach, your first call should be to me." Ladies and gentlemen, I was the AD AND Head Football Coach at the time! It was clear to me that this guys did ZERO homework about our school!

## **Number Two – Proofread Your Resume**

It's amazing how many resumes I've seen that have the WRONG school listed under "objective." I've seen people write under this objective headline towards the top of the resume: "To secure the Head Soccer Coach position at Glendale High School." When I got this at Capistrano Valley Christian School one time, I threw out the resume. I'll be honest, I didn't even read it. That person might have been an Olympic soccer coach, I don't know. But what I do know about that person, they lack attention to detail, and I want a person with attention to detail! If your resume is littered with grammatical errors, it shows that you are uneducated and lazy. I'm probably not going to look at it very long.

Make sure that your resume is accurate. If you mess up the dates that you were at a certain school, or you copy and paste your title from one school to the next, but then what you did at that position doesn't make sense by what you type under that in the body, you aren't going to look very good on paper. Have a few different people look at your resume, it is always good to have a few different sets of eyes putting your resume under the microscope.

## **Number Three – Make The Format Easy To Follow**

I've received these huge packages from folks who were applying to the job. (And I'm guilty of sending out my Coaching Portfolio too easy in the process.) As an Athletic Director, I'm a pretty busy person. And when I have a position to fill, there are usually a lot of applicants. Keep the format that you present yourself to an Athletic Director simple. Make it easy to follow and understand. I've seen some resumes with so much information on them, it's just information overload, and my eyes don't even want to read it. Format your resume in such a way that it's easy to trace your career path, while showing off the highlights to potential readers.

Again, this is why I think having several different resumes on hand is important. Personally, I have four different resumes that I've used in the past: an Athletic Director resume, a football coaching resume, a Chaplain/Youth Pastor resume, and a teaching resume. I've worked at five places in the last eighteen years: two churches, two private schools and now a public school. My different resumes highlight different experiences I've had. For instance, I've led several mission trips overseas, to Kenya, Mexico, and Pakistan. I don't put that information on my football coach resume, it's just too much extra information.



Don't send too much information with your first interest package or email. I would advise you to send a letter of interest, your resume, two to three letters of reference and perhaps a philosophical statement. Much more than that is probably too much with your first contact. I even suggest making two contacts to show that you are interested in the job. When a person reaches out to me twice, I know it is important to them. If they keep bugging me though, that will turn me off! There is a fine balance here you must figure out.

#### **Number Four – Brag About Yourself!**

You've got to highlight your accomplishments. I've seen SO many stinking boring resumes. They just list the facts. They list titles, and years and job descriptions. Ho-hum. You've seen one boring resume, you've seen them all. Keep your resume simple and easy to follow but you've got to capture the attention of the AD. You've got to pack that thing with facts and figures that make the AD reading it put it in the YES or MAYBE pile. I always make three piles of resumes: yes, no and maybe. Yes I want to interview this person, I might want to interview this person, and no way am I going to interview this person. Get your resume in the yes pile by showing me that you're a great coach. Prove it on paper as best as you can. Don't tell me that you coached at XYZ School. Tell me that

you coached 3 collegiate linemen in one year, that you helped six kids get scholarships in just two years; tell me what programs you started to help improve the GPA of your team; tell me what the numbers were when you took over, and how you improved those while you were there. Don't just show me a win-loss record. Show me what the winning percentage was BEFORE you got there, and what it was WHEN you were there.

You've only got 30 seconds with that resume in front of an Athletic Director, maybe up to a minute. Brag about yourself early and often! Make your career jump off that paper by using real stats, facts and figures that make the person reading it say "I need to talk with this guy."

## **6 KEY THINGS THAT AN**

## **ATHLETIC DIRECTOR LOOKS FOR ON A RESUME**

Admittedly I have not been an Athletic Director for that long, not to proud to say that. I have no clue what the turnover rates are for Athletic Directors, [but I know they are high](#). So maybe only being in my fifth year does make me a veteran!

**I've hired 26 head coaches over the span of my 5 year Athletic Director career.** (This is at two different schools.) When I took over at Capistrano Valley Christian on July 1, 2007, I immediately had to find three head coaches! Talk about getting thrown in to the lion's den right away! Now, I'm at [Excelsior Charter](#) in Victorville. Currently, I'm searching for 5 coaches - a head wrestling coach and his/her assistant, and three assistant soccer coaches. We are starting both sports at our school next year.

I've hired head varsity coaches for the following sports: Cross Country (1), Boys Basketball (2), Girls Basketball (2), Boys Soccer (3), Girls Soccer (1), Softball (2), Cheer (2), Golf (1) and Girls Volleyball (2). I've hired four head junior varsity coaches: basketball (1) and football (3).

I've also hired about fifteen assistant varsity and junior varsity football coaches during my eight years as a Head Football Coach. One year, we really expanded our coaching staff, added a JV program. I hired five coaches that season alone. **I interviewed roughly twenty candidates for those five spots.**

I wanted to lay out my hiring experience so that you know I have seen hundreds of resumes, and hired many head coaches. **I think I have done a great job hiring coaches as my staff at Capo won 5 League Championships in my fourth year as AD there, the most in school history!** Overall, my staffs have won 14 League Championships, 1 CIF Section Championship and 1 8 man football State Championship in the last five years.

Head Coach searches can bring in anywhere from 5 to 75 resumes and coaching portfolios depending on the sport, and the timing. [I like to cast a very wide net when hiring](#), to give me the best shot at finding the absolute BEST coach.

**Here are the 6 things I look for on a resume when I'm looking for a Head Coach:**

## **1. EXPERIENCE**

What kind of experience is the candidate bringing to the table? Is the experience he or she garnered all at one school? At multiple schools? What level has this experience been at? Varsity level? JV level? College experience? To me, this experience is crucial, and why it is the very first thing that came to mind. **"Experience" is a very broad word that covers: the schools they have been at, the coaches they coached under, the jobs they had there, etc.** This all goes under the "experience" category.

## **2. QUALITY OF PROGRAM**

**To me the quality of program a candidate is coming from is more important than the amount of years they have spent coaching.** For instance, if I have two guys that I see are "even" across the board, but one has been a Varsity defensive backs coach for fifteen years at a school that won one league championship and made it to the playoffs every other year versus a defensive backs coach who had only coached six years, but those six years were at a school who qualified for the playoffs every year and had several state championship playoff appearances, I would lean towards that experience because of the **QUALITY** of the program he is coming from.

I'm a firm believe that the quality of the program is more important than the years in the seat.

### **3. DID YOU MAKE IMPROVEMENTS?**

I don't want to see on your resume that you were the special teams coordinator for four years at XYZ School; I want to see that you improved their kick return average start from the 18.25 yard line to the 26.8 yard line after two years. I want to see stats on your resume. I want to see real numbers. I want to see that as the wide receivers coach, your guys led the league in receiving every year you were there. I want to see that your running backs improved from averaging 3.8 yards per carry the year before you started to 4.9 yards per carry after you started.

**If you've been a head coach somewhere else, I want to see the four year win-loss record on that resume before you got there, and the four year win-loss record for the four years you managed the program. Did they get better or worse under your leadership?**

**Did you improve the quality of the program while you were there?** I tell coaches all of the time that you've got to spell this out on your resume for athletic

directors and administrators to see. Don't just give the facts of the jobs you've held; give the figures too. Figures that show YOU have made a difference where you have been.

#### **4. DID YOU INNOVATE?**

Are you a status quo type of person or are you an innovator? As an Athletic Director, I like innovators. I like coaches who think outside of the box to get the job done, not "clock watchers" who are just happy with fielding a program. I've been at relatively "small schools" most of my career. At the small school level coaches have got to share athletes, they have to rely on some fundraising, and they have to work harder to keep their kids in the school.

**Coaches who don't innovate aren't going to be able to build very good programs.** I want to see innovation on your resume. I want to see that you started programs at the places you've been. Maybe you started a strength and conditioning program, a fundraising program, an after school study hall program, whatever it is. I like to see innovation on a resume because it really tells me a lot about the coach. It tells me a lot about their passion and work ethic.

#### **5. HAVE YOU MOVED UP THE LADDER?**

Most career counselors will say it is important to move up the ladder, and I agree. **I want to see that your career has progressed in a way that you have "moved up the ladder."** I want to see that coaches applying for head coaching positions have put their time in to the profession and have done a good job of moving along up the ladder towards being a head coach. It always amazes me seeing resumes of football coaches applying for a head job after having coached for a few years. Many times these are cocky guys who think they are God's gift to coaching. I was named a head coach once where one of the coaches I inherited on the staff also applied for the job - he had coached ONE year! Yet, he thought he knew enough to take over a program. Amazing.

If you are just making a lateral move to my school, I'm going to really look at the reasons why. I would hate to see you make that lateral move again, away from my school after I've invested in you.

## **6. DID YOUR TEAMS OVER OR UNDER ACHIEVE?**

This might be the most important thing for me, second to experience.

**I want to see that the teams you've coached have overachieved.** Again, this tells me a lot about you as a coach. Let's face it, we all know coaches that we are



better than who have won a lot of games simply because of the athletes that they are surrounded by! A monkey could come in to their school and win right?!

Have you been able to win and achieve with mediocre talent? To me, a coach who gets the most out of his team is much more valuable than coaches who have won with stacked teams. Overachieving coaches will always be overachieving coaches. They will always be able to get every drop of talent out of that sponge. Coaches who have won because they were surrounded by athletes always have a difficult time when those athletes graduate. They got by on being lazy when those athletes were there.

I want to see that you overachieved where you were. **I would rather a hire a 4-6 coach who should've been 2-8 but overachieved than a coach who went 8-2 but should have been 10-0!**

## **SECURING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

The more, the merrier! This is my philosophy when it comes to securing letters of recommendation. I have about thirty letters of recommendation personally. I have worked for two churches and three schools since 1995. I have several letters of recommendation from each of those five places. Does a letter of recommendation from 1996 when I left Fallbrook First Baptist for college going to help me secure a job in 2014? I don't know. You never know. If I'm applying for a job at a Christian school to be their Head Football Coach they might appreciate what my pastor had to say in 1995, and how that matches up with what a Superintendent from 2011 says. Does that make sense?

I have letters of recommendation from:

- Head coaches I've worked for
- Head coaches I coached against
- Assistant coaches I've worked alongside
- Assistant coaches I've supervised
- Parents whose sons I've coached
- Players who I've coached
- Athletic Directors I've worked for
- Athletic Directors I've worked side by side with in the same league
- Commissioners of our state's governing body
- Principals I've worked for
- Vice principals I've worked for

- Head coaches I've supervised
- My pastor
- Superintendents I've worked for
- Teachers I've worked with in the same department
- Director of Human Resources from one school I worked at

There are a few reasons I collect so many letters of recommendation for my file. Number one, you never know what a district is going to want to see. Some say specifically that they want a letter from a supervisor, some just say "3 letters of recommendation." So, it's good to have an arsenal to choose from. It is good to have all of these in my arsenal so that I don't have to ask someone where I am currently working, in case I don't want them to know I might be looking around. So, I really suggest getting a few letters from your workplace every time you move from somewhere. You never know when those might help.

For instance, a principal I once worked for wrote me one on his letterhead of the school where he was working after he left where we worked together. That was at a college. So, he wrote this letter on great looking college letterhead. A few years later I applied to that school for an Assistant Athletic Director job. It was great to be able to send their Athletic Director that letter. I'm sure it grabbed his attention right away. I can't say for sure, but my guess is that seeing a letter from someone who worked at his school was probably a great thing.

When I'm applying for jobs, one thing that I like to do is send a few emails to the school. I might reach out to their Athletic Director, their Principal and maybe even the Booster Club president if I can find their information on the school's website. Guess what? I have a fantastic letter from a Booster Club President that I worked for. He even put "Booster Club President" under his name. So, I send that one to the Booster Club President! To the principal I will send a few letters of recommendation from the principals I've worked for. To the AD, a few letters from ADs I've worked for.

Another thing I've done is sent a letter of recommendation from my file, from a certain Athletic Director I worked alongside to a certain AD at a school I was trying to get a job at. Reason being: this AD and the school where this person worked has a tremendous athletic program. And this AD is VERY respected by 95% of the ADs in Southern California. So, that letter of recommendation would go far with this certain AD at this certain school. If I apply for a job in Texas, and send that letter, it won't hold much weight. Nobody there would probably even recognize the name of this school, much less the AD who wrote it. The key here? Know your audience!!

Try to figure out who on the campus where you are applying might know somebody you have crossed paths with in your career. Maybe the principal at that school was coached by your Athletic Director who wrote you a great letter of recommendation 10 years ago. Use that letter!! Do you see where I'm going with this process?

## **HOW TO KNOW IF YOU WERE IN A SHAM INTERVIEW**

One of the most popular series of questions I get via twitter, email and text message is regarding how to apply for a job, what to send to the Athletic Director, how to follow up with an AD, etc.

The tagline for my [Eight Laces Consulting](#) business is: ***Preparing coaches to be hired for the job of their dreams, and providing coaches and Athletic Directors with dynamite resources to become even more successful.*** I take great joy in helping you guys all over the nation in this process.

I became unemployed for the first time in my life in July 2011, at 35 years old, married and with three kids. A new Superintendent was hired at the private school I was working at and “wanted to go in a different direction.” I was the Head Football Coach (we won the League Championship that year), and the Athletic Director (we won 5 League Championships, setting a 35 year school record; still a record two years later!).

I don't blame the direction they went in football wise, as they were able to [bring in a fantastic football coach](#), and man, who had 25 years of NCAA Division

1 football coaching experience under his belt. Definitely couldn't compete with that!

**So, I was looking for a job for the first time in my life.** I had been in education for 10 years at that time, and never looked for those jobs I had, they found me; including two head football jobs, I didn't apply for either one. I was in youth ministry for 6 years before that, and had not had to ever look for a job.

So, this was brand new territory for me, finding a job in the coaching/Athletic Director world! I was experienced in *HIRING* coaches, and *FIRING* coaches, but not finding a job myself. So, I set out to find some help on the internet. **And all I could find was advice for the business world (some of it applied) and college football and AD jobs (most of it didn't apply).** Needless to say, I learned a WHOLE lot during that time. I enjoy writing, and I enjoy helping coaches, so this has been a great experience.

I was offered a job within just a few weeks at another private school as their Athletic Director. But the finances just did not work for my family. A few weeks later, I was offered an Offensive Coordinator job at a private school in San Diego. And that job was less than HALF what our family needed. I thought

another job offer would come along quick, but it didn't. It was so LATE in the hiring process that all of the jobs were filled. I was out of work in education for about 9 months. So, I did what any unemployed football coach would do: I covered games for a local newspaper, and got a part time job driving a taxi (man, that was a LOT of fun!)

**I applied to 176 jobs during those 9 months, 176!** Let that sink in for a minute! That's 19 job applications per month!

I applied for jobs from being a Superintendent (was a final three guy for that) at a private Christian school in Santa Barbara to Head Football Coach all the way on the East Coast to gas station manager right down the road. I was in panic mode after that Offensive Coordinator job fell through, and was just looking for *ANYTHING* to provide for my family once the school year started, and I knew I was not going to be hired in August!

From July 2011 to March 2012 I had 8 interviews at schools (where I really wanted to work). 1 was for a Chaplain job in Texas, 3 AD jobs in Southern California and 4 Head Football jobs in Southern California. Timing was awful. July/August was wayyyy to late in the hiring process, and Jan-March was pretty



early. So, they were all pretty unique situations to be very honest. **Out of those 7 interviews, I was offered 3 of the jobs. I think that's a pretty decent percentage in the world of high school athletics. Finally, I accepted one of them, as an Athletic Director.**

*I wanted to share all of that (I know it is very long) to give you some perspective on why I write about this stuff!*

I've written extensively about the job search process from the view point of an Athletic Director as I have been one here in Southern California since 2007. Between last Thursday and Friday, in just a 24 hour period, I had SIX contact about this exact topic!

So, I thought it was time for some writing on this topic to help you out at this very busy time of the job search season for football coaches.

Here are some of the key things I learned through the process of both looking for a job, and hiring folks for a job. I'm not sure how many parts this will be, but I have three done already! So, let's get in to it!

**IS THIS A REAL OR FAKE INTERVIEW???**

Two of the Head Football Coach interviews I had were a complete waste of time. One of them, I could tell as soon as I got to the school that they had already made up their mind. I just knew it. In fact, I almost left because I was so convinced that the “interview” was just a process they were putting people through to tell *their* people (parents, players, faculty/staff) that they did a “search” and “interview” process.

In fact, I've gotten to know one of the other candidates that day through twitter, and we compared notes! Yep! He felt the same way I did, it was a sham.

## **1. HOW TO TELL YOU'RE IN A FAKE INTERVIEW**

### **A. NUMBER OF CANDIDATES AND LENGTH OF INTERVIEW**

When I showed up to that interview I referred to above, a person asked me to find my name on a piece of paper. This lady actually handed me a piece of paper with all **TEN** candidates' names on it! **TEN!** ***They were going to interview ten of us that day for 30 minutes each.*** I felt this was a complete sham right then. What can you **REALLY** figure out in a 30 minute interview? They were just moving people in and out of there so they could say they did it!

**Find out how many people they are going to interview before you go in, and**

**find out how long the interview will be.** If they are doing 30 minute interviews, and they are not saying “this is a preliminary interview, a first round interview,” it’s probably a sham interview.

*Find out what the interview process will be like. Many times, from my experience, if there is only one interview, they probably already know who they are going to hire. Not always, but I would guess this is true most of the time.*

When I was at Capo Valley Christian as the AD, I would bring in 3-4 to interview for head jobs. Those interviews would be with myself, the principal and the Superintendent. We would go in to those interviews hoping to make a selection after just one interview. So, some schools do it like that. Most of the time, we found our guy after 1 interview. But that is because I would do a LOT of work on these top 3-4 candidates before the interviews. I learned early in my career as an AD to do some fact checking and reference checking before the final interview process. Lots of reasons for that.

***But the key here is to try to figure out what the interview process will be***

***like.*** Ask the AD or Human Resources some tough questions about this. Press

them a little. You might be able to tell if the interview process is really a sham or not.

## **2. WHO IS BEING INTERVIEWED**

Try to find out who else is being interviewed. This will help you to determine if your interview is just a sham. For instance, if they are interviewing three of you, and one of them is already on their staff as a Coordinator, and has been at the school for a dozen years, you might be walking in to a sham interview.

If you are able to find out that one of the finalists for an AD job at a school you're interviewing with is married to the most popular coach on campus (it's true, happened to me), you just might be walking in to a sham interview!

Network with anyone that you might know at the school, network with anyone you might know in the league. You never know what you might hear just by asking around about the job. You might learn that they already have someone in mind, or that it is a wide open job. **Do what you can to find out who else is being interviewed.** This will help you as you prepare, and interview.

Going back to yesterday's blog, that list that the lady [handed me](#), I was second on the list, so I found my name very fast. **BUT**, I had the opportunity to see who my competition was, so I took a look.

**I saw the last name on the list**, the coach who had the last interview of the day, and I recognized it from the research I did on the school in preparation for my interview. In fact, it was the only name I recognized on the list of other candidates. He was a Coordinator in the football program there, and **on staff at the school**.

*Okay, I get it, hiring from within, I'm fine with that, but just don't waste my stinking time!!* Sure enough, that guy got the job! *I knew he would as soon as I saw his name on the list, especially in that last position!*

Another Head Football interview I had that Spring was at a school I really wanted to be at. A school I knew had underachieved for a long time. **When I signed in at the front office, I looked at the names of people who had signed in before me, and where they went!** A little trick for you to do in order to see if you can figure out who your competition will be.

Sure enough, I saw two names of males on there who had been to Human Resources within the past three hours. **So, I googled those names when I sat down, and found they were local football coaches.** One had been fired from his Head Football job just a few months prior to that interview date, and lived very close. So, I did some research on him while I waited for my interview, right there on my phone! **And I found a great piece about him to bring up in a sly way during my interview,** not using his name of course. I knew that I had a good shot at that job based on the other two applicants. *(I lost that job in a BIZARRE WAY that I will discuss later in this series!! You won't believe it!)*

**Another way to find out who your competition is is through message boards.** Get on them if you don't ever check them out. Find the message boards for that area where you are interviewing, see who people are saying are getting interviews, or have interviewed. Again, this might help you understand if the interview is a sham or not. Obviously, message board hounds usually don't have a **CLUE** what is going on.

However, **sometimes they do.** I believe that where there is smoke, there is fire.

I went on an interview at a high profile Southern California private school job. In fact, I was kind of surprised that I was called in for an interview to be completely honest! Later on, I realized it was a sham interview! A few days before that interview, I saw some discussion pop up on a message board about this school hiring a certain coach; he was a high profile coach. Messages were saying that it “was a done deal.”

**I was discouraged.** There were multiple people talking about the fact that they knew for a fact this was a done deal; a few who I knew were close to the program. But I went anyway for two reasons: it’s a bulletin board, not the gospel, and two, because this was a high profile school. I thought it would be good for me to press flesh with the people in that room. ***You never know what might come of it down the road.*** (In fact, an administrator in that room asked me more questions about my AD experience than my head football experience, and actually asked me if I would be interested in their AD job.)

Sure enough, a few weeks later, that coach who was rumored to be the guy **was the guy!** And then he wasn't the guy! He was fired half way through the season! Ouch! They should have hired me!

**One final, very EASY way to tell if you're sitting in a sham interview: they aren't listening to you!!**

There were 5 people on the interview panel at that place where they interviewed 10 of us in one day. ***Two of them never looked up from their interview forms, my portfolio or their phones!*** On their PHONES during the **entire** interview. That tells me that they KNEW they were wasting their time as well.

**In fact, I received an email the NEXT day saying thank you for coming in for an interview = SHAM interview!!**



## **QUESTIONS I ASK OF POTENTIAL**

### **HEAD COACHES DURING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS**

I thought I would share the list of questions I ask in an interview while searching for a Head Coach.

#### **HEAD COACH INTERVIEW**

1. Years experience coaching? Where?
2. What has been your most important accomplishment as a coach?
3. What has been your biggest disappointment?
4. What are your coaching goals? Short term? Long term?
5. What are your strengths as a coach? List your top 3.
6. What are your weaknesses as a coach? List your top 3.
7. When your team encounters a problem, such as irritation with a teammate or a member of the coaching staff, how do you reach a good resolution?
8. How do you distribute and collect uniforms?
9. How do you go about conducting your first Parent Meeting and what do are some important items to go over with them.

10. What steps are you going to take to generate interest in girls getting involved in the softball program here?
11. What steps are you going to take to get the “outside” community interested in the program here?
12. What is your philosophy of Strength and Conditioning in your program?

**SITUATIONAL COACHING QUESTIONS**

1. What do you know about our softball program?
2. How are you going to improve a 32% winning program over the last 5 years?
3. How do you score runs in softball? Offensive philosophy?
4. Defensive/pitching philosophy? What is it?
5. How do you coach baserunning?
6. How do you prepare your team for a game?
7. How do you work with officials? What is your philosophy on the way that you treat them?

Ever been tossed from a game? If so, what did you do and what did you learn from it?

1. If a parent approached you after practice or a game on your way to your car and wanted to talk with you about playing time, what would you do? How would you respond?
2. What do you think is the most important aspect of a championship (sport) team?
3. Our athletic department motto here is “. . . . .” How will you do both of these things in our softball program?

**Do you have any questions about our program?**

Your time commitment? Compensation? Facilities? Equipment? Fundraising?

I started THE WORLD'S LARGEST COACHING INTERVIEW DATABASE at

[COACHFORE.ORG](http://COACHFORE.ORG). Check it out!

## **HOW TO SHOCK THE INTERVIEW PANEL:**

### **PREPARING YOURSELF FOR THE BIG DAY**

One of the best things that you can do for yourself during the interview process is to “shock” the interview panel with your knowledge about the position and program you are interviewing to be a part of. I have been in a few interviews as a head football coach candidate, or athletic director candidate, where I knew more about the football program, or athletic department than some of the folks on the other side of the table. For instance, I had an interview in April of 2012 for an athletic director job at a public charter school. I did hours and hours of research on the history of their athletic department. I found out that they had won only 3 League Championships in their first TEN years of athletics; that’s an awful record. I did some research on the longevity of their coaching staff, and this led me to the diagnosis of their problem, in my opinion. Their head coaching turnover was too much. For instance, they went through 5 head softball coaches in 5 back to back years. The program just cannot get stabilization for success with this kind of turnover.

The two board members, and even the principal on the panel didn’t even know this much about their own softball program. So, when they asked a

question of me in regards to how I would help to establish a winning culture, I first spoke to the fact that we needed to stabilize the head coaches. I pointed to the fact that they had gone through 5 softball coaches in 5 years. One of the board members stopped me and said “how do you know this? I don’t even know that, and I’ve been here for 10 years!” I said “Well sir, I’ve done my homework.” I then looked in my notes and named all five coaches. He turned to the principal and superintendent and said “I had no idea we were going through coaches like this in softball, why is this happening?” This is one way to “shock” the interview panel!

Being prepared for your interview in a manner in which you might shock the interview panel will help to put you in the second round of interviews. You need to do your homework on the position, and the program you are looking at by getting to know that program so well, you can diagnose the good, the bad, and the ugly during that interview process. I’m going to tell you some of the ways that you can study the program you are going to interview with.

First of all, use the internet! Make great use of the technology available to you. If you’re a football coach, get on Maxpreps and do research on the current roster. Find out who they have coming back. Find out who their leading tackler,

leading offensive player from the year before was; see if that person is coming back or not. Going in to the interview knowing that their 3 year starting quarterback is graduating is a VERY important key. On the other hand, imagine finding out that their two time All League QB has one more year left! Are they graduating 10 of their 11 starting defensive players? Are they returning 9 offensive starters? What about their kicker? These are things that you need to study about the program.

Take a look at the schedule that they just played last year. What are the strengths and weaknesses of that schedule? Did they blow people out, go 12-0, and the head coach got promoted to a better job in another district? Or, did they go 0-10, and the coach got fired? Knowing what happened last year is important. Get a great feel for the league. I interviewed at a school that was .500 or a game above .500 for about 5-6 years in a row. But as I studied their results over the last ten years, I found out that they were 0-20 the last 4 years in their league! Then you have to ask yourself why they have not won a league game in the last 4 years.

The next step in getting to know the program is through making phone calls or sending emails to the coaches in that league. "Hey, I noticed such and such school hasn't won a league game in 4 years. I'm interviewing for that job over

there. What is going on there? Why are they not winning in league?" This school I told you about, I found out through making these phone calls that they are the ONLY school in the league that does NOT have "extra" financial aid for student-athletes. It just is not a part of their business plan. So, the playing field really isn't level when one school is bringing in athletes by giving them extra financial aid and one school isn't. I wouldn't have known that without picking up the phone to call some coaches in that league.

With that AD job I referred to earlier this chapter, I called a few ADs in the league to get a feel for the school. One told me "It's a mess over there in terms of sportsmanship; the other ADs in the league have a pretty tough time with them. They go through ADs pretty quick too." These were two HUGE red flags about the school. The internet wouldn't have told me those things. You have to pick up the phone as you prepare for your interview. Get to know that athletic program better than the panel does!

Contact some media members in that area. I've always worked very well with the media. I have great media contacts with every section here in Southern California. From all the way down in San Diego, up to Los Angeles, from Orange County beaches to the desert out in Palm Springs, I can pick up the phone and call

a reporter to get an idea about most of the 600 Southern California schools.

Media members can give you some GREAT insight on schools that you might not be able to garner from anyone else. If you are able to develop a great relationship with media members where there is great trust, and you can simply talk off the record with them, it will help you gain valuable insight.

Search and scour the school's website for information that you can use in your interview. Know the school's history. Memorize their mission statement. Are they going through a great time in their school's history, a period of growth and success? Or are they struggling in different areas? If it is a private school, spend time on the admissions page so that you are familiar with this process. Try to find out what the school holds dear on their website; what is important to them? Do they have 5 pages about their drama program, and only 1 about athletics? This might be a bad sign as a coach. Are there bios for the faculty? If so, do they list the years these teachers have been there? Are there more teachers who have only been there 2-3 years or teachers who have been there 12-15 years? This will tell you a LOT about the type of school it is, and what kind of place it is to work.



Do the best that you can to find out who is on the interview panel. This can be another way to “shock” them. Again, use the school’s website to learn about these individuals. If Mrs. Susie Jones is on the panel as a faculty member, look her up on the school’s website. You might find out that she played for the USA Olympic Softball team in 2000, and that she has an extensive background in athletics. This is GREAT to know. You might also read that she has a son who is 16. Check out that roster on maxpreps, does her son play football? Again, GREAT to know! If there is a Booster Club representative on the panel, google him or her. Find out what they do for a living. I’ve been in an interview where one of the Booster Club members was a sports doctor in the community. So, I spoke a lot about Sports Medicine, and even referred specifically to him a few times. I called him by Dr. (Last Name). One of the members on the panel said “Well, you did your homework didn’t you?” I found out that lady was in real estate. So I responded back to her “I hear real estate is picking up!” Everybody around the table laughed! This was a way to “shock” the panel!



## **10 QUESTIONS WITH A SUPERINTENDENT**

I interviewed Dr. David Baker from Southern California about the process of hiring a coach from the seat of a Superintendent. In for disclosure, Dr. Baker hired me as his Head Football Coach and Athletic Director at Capistrano Valley Christian School in San Juan Capistrano, California in 2006.

Dr. Baker spent forty years as an educator. 35 years with Azusa Unified, and 5 years in the private sector. Before becoming the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources at Azusa Unified School District, Dr. Baker was the Director of Human Resources there for 19 years. After retiring from Azusa Unified, he became the Superintendent at Capistrano Valley Christian. As you could imagine from this long career in HR and as a Superintendent, Dr. Baker has interviewed more than 1,000 people for a wide variety of school district jobs.

Dr. Baker is one of the smartest administrators I have ever worked for. I respect the heck out of what he has done in the world of education, and specifically his experience in Human Resources. His extensive background in this area has helped me to understand the process of hiring the best coaches I can. We worked together for four years, and went through the hiring process with about twelve to fifteen coaches.

Here are ten questions I asked of Dr. Baker to help give you a snapshot in to the mind of a Superintendent.

**1. From your perspective and experience in hiring hundreds of people as a Superintendent, what are the top 3 things that you look for on a resume?**

A. The very first thing I look at is their coaching experience, both as a head coach and an assistant coach. I would want to know their total coaching background, where they have been and what they have done as a coach.

B. Next, I would want to examine the quality of the coach's references. Who is he listing as people that he wants us to talk with? Who is willing to provide recommendations for this coach? That's important stuff.

C. Finally, I'm going to look at his resume to determine what else he/she can do for the school. What subjects can he/she teach? Are there other sports he/she can coach, and do we have a need for any of those coaches? Coaching is always an "extra pay" assignment, it is not what really pays the bills. So I want to know what else he can do for the school to earn the largest chunk of his salary.

**2. What part of the employment package is most important to you as the Superintendent? It is the resume piece? The cover letter? The portfolio?**

I'm going to spend the least amount of time on the resume, maybe 30-45 seconds to get their background. Most of my time is spent reading and rereading the letter of application. This means his cover letter, and his application. Usually there is an application with questions on it. When a person is asked to write, it reveals the qualities of their educational background. How well written a person is can tell you a lot about them. The cover letter should be well planned and flawless. I mean, it should have no spelling errors, the punctuation should be perfect.

**3. What is your main objective when interviewing a candidate?**

By the time a candidate sits down to speak with us, I've already determined he meets the qualifications. So, I'm not going to spend time in the interview process talking about those qualifications. He/She is good there.

I'm going to determine how suitable he is for our campus. Remember, there is a big difference between being **qualified** and being **suitable**. So that is where I'm going to spend most of my time: suitability. How will he **fit** with the school community? This includes staff, students and parents. Is this candidate a fit? That's my main objective during the interview process.

**4. From all of your experience, what are *THE 3* most important things candidate can do in interview?**

A. The very first thing that comes to mind is that candidates need to be prepared to represent yourself in a professional manner. Your answers should be not **too** short and not **too** long. Your responses need to be **just right**

B. The candidate needs to demonstrate your sincere desire to be chosen for the position. Don't be casual about taking the position. Don't take this interview lightly. Show the panel that you want to be there.

C. Think about your non-verbal behaviors. Your appearance, eye contact, voice quality, your smile. These things are all important in building relationships with people. These things speak volumes to the people interviewing you.

**5. You've interviewed more than 1,000 candidates during your career in Human Resources. What do you see as the top three mistakes candidates make during the interview process?**

A. The first thing that they simply do NOT do their homework on the school, and the job. Candidates who fail to prepare themselves in this way can lose the good graces of the panel very quickly.

B. Being over confident is another big mistake that candidates make during the interview process. When they are not taking interview process seriously because they think too much of themselves, that's a mistake. I've seen candidates present themselves as if they are the best coach since Vince Lombardi. That's probably not the case. Be confident, not cocky.

C. Non-verbal behaviors would be the third mistake people make. Those non-verbal behaviors that don't represent the candidate in a positive manner can hurt them during an interview. Maybe it's that they dressed poorly, there was no or little eye contact, their voice quality is poor, there no humor. Those are some of the things that hurt candidates.

## **6. What is appropriate for candidate to bring?**

Bring nothing unless it is requested. The interview panel has a schedule they are on, and usually it is a very tight schedule. Candidates are scheduled one right after the other. Often time, the panel doesn't have time to look at unsolicited material. Their entire playbook, press clippings, etc.; don't bring that stuff unless you are specifically asked to. Those things should be avoided when participating in an interview unless it is particularly solicited.

**7. When you are hiring a Head Football Coach specifically, what are the three most important things that you are looking for?**

A. First of all, it's his ability to relate to and influence student-athletes. If he can't do that, forget it. Has this candidate been able to have a positive impact on student-athletes? That's the first thing I'm looking for.

B. Next is his ability to grow a program over a period of time. Has he done this in the past? Does he have the ability, the skill set to do it? I'm going to look at the skill level of players he has coached, and evaluate what he did with what he had. Did he grow a program with what he had? Did he generate enthusiasm in the overall school community for support of the program? That's a very important thing.

C. Does this candidate have the ability to be a part of a team with members of a school staff? This is where the **fit** comes in that we spoke about earlier. You can have all of the wins in the world, but do **you** fit on our campus?

**8. How do you, as the Superintendent, evaluate a candidate's win/loss record? How important is the overall record of a candidate in making your decision about hiring him?**



The win/loss record is often determined by factors outside of the coach. Talent, schedule, injuries. These things are not necessarily in the control of the coach, so take that for what it's worth.

I'm going to take a longer look at the things that the coach has control over. Those things are more important than the win loss record.

**9. How does a Superintendent evaluate all of off the field items such as GPA, sportsmanship, etc?**

The coaching job is secondary to the teaching position on campus. The success of a teacher is in direct relation to how well teachers know students, knows subject matter, and relates that subject matter. The same thing for the coach. His success is built on his relationship to the players, and these off the field issues rise and fall with that relationship.

The value of the coach is that they have an extra opportunity outside of the classroom as a coach. This opportunity to influence is greater, and give you more bang for your buck.

**10. What is the most important piece of advice that you can give a candidate?**

Opportunities usually go to the candidate prepared to accept the job. Prepare for the interview by knowing about the school, the job. Be prepared for the opening process and the closing process of the interview; the very first few minutes and the last few minutes. Between the opening and closing of the interview, you don't have control over those questions. The better prepared a candidate is, the more confident he/she will be. This allows them to be themselves. That is my most important piece of advice right there: be prepared, be confident, be yourself.

## **10 THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE TAKING A NEW JOB**

### **1. The Administration**

Does the administration support athletics? Is it support in word or support in deed or support in both? I've worked at three schools since 2001. Five at one, five at another, and started at my third school back in June of 2012. Before 2001, I worked as a substitute for a few different districts as well, but don't really count those.

I've seen some really great administrators who supported athletics, and some who didn't. I've seen administrators who SAID they supported athletics, and some who said they did but really didn't when push came to shove. I've seen one principal who was at just as many athletic events as me, the athletic director. He (Dr. Terry Gaunt of Capistrano Valley Christian Schools in San Juan Capistrano) is the best principal I've worked for. He supported athletics in more ways than his coaches would ever know. One reason, he was the former Head Baseball Coach, former Athletic Director, and he played collegiate baseball. He grew up around athletics. It makes a big difference when your key administrators have been athletic directors and or coaches.

One way to find out if the administration really supports athletics is by asking around. Try your hardest to contact some coaches at the school, totally off the record. It's usually not what is said, it is what is NOT said that will key you in to the admin. Get to campus early on the day of your interview and ask around. Ask some kids, it's amazing what they will say to a guy in a suit that they don't know!

## **2. The History**

What has happened with the football program in the past? I like to look at four time periods, and literally go through their records and total them up. What was their record last year? How about the last three years? The last five years? The last ten years? Total up their win-loss record of those four different periods. See what the win percentage is. Look hard at why they have the win percentage they do. Have they been able to win any league championships over the last ten years? If not, what can you see in their league that might tell you why. For instance, when I was at Capistrano Valley Christian, I was competing for three years against THE best small school in the state of California, St. Margarets Episcopal. They won 42 games in a row, a State Championship, and three section championships. How awesome they were in my league huh?! AND, less than 2

miles from my campus. Here I was in their league, and they had the best three year run in their school's history.

How many different coaches have there been the last three, five, ten years? That should tell you a little about the win/loss record being where it is. It will also tell you a little about the stability of the program. Obviously, if they've been through five coaches in ten years, we have an issue. You need to determine what the issues might be. These two historical perspectives are KEY as you investigate the job: win/loss record and coaching history.

### **3. The Enrollment**

From 2001 to 2005, Linfield Christian went from 195 students to 450! I left in 2006. At Capistrano Valley Christian, enrollment went from 240 in 2006 to 172 in 2010. Needless to say, football improved quite a bit while at Linfield, and got worse while I was at Capo. I competed against Capo and we had common opponents in the 2001-04 seasons. I was always impressed by them, and thought it would be a great school to work for. BUT, I had NO clue what was going on behind the scenes with the enrollment. A brand new school opened a few miles away that was just absolutely draining their 8<sup>th</sup> grade kids. A large number of

8<sup>th</sup> graders were going to the newer, bigger, better school. It had a very negative impact on the overall enrollment. Not only did we go from 240 to 172 while I was there, we went from having ten international students to forty!

If you are going to a public school you might not have to worry about enrollment. This is something that is so state specific, and area specific in your state. I have no idea how enrollment issues effect a public school in Kentucky!! But at a private school in Southern California, it's tough to put together a competitive football program with an enrollment that is going down the toilet!

#### **4. The Money**

Two areas here that are important: the money in your pocket and the money in your program! How much are you going to be paid for your "day" job and your football job? Sometimes coaches do not want to ask these questions, or really investigate this part of your job, for whatever reason. But it is important for your family. You single guys have a little more freedom here. Us married guys don't! Will the money you will make be enough to meet the demands of your family? I just had to turn down a job interview at a really decent program out here in a few divisions above where I've spent most of my career, because

financially it just wouldn't work for us. Ask questions about camps in the summer too. Coaches can make up some money by running summer camps. You won't retire off the money, but it can help supplement the minimal amount of money that coaching makes. Instead of a nickel an hour, maybe you can make a dime!! Ask about playoff money too. Most schools don't compensate their coaches for making it to the playoffs, and working hard for an extra one, two, four weeks. Why is this? The system most schools use mean that the more successful your program is, the less money you make. Isn't this weird? I'm glad that school I just started at here in June, we were able to get the school board to approve playoff money. That's how it should be everywhere. Coaches, try to negotiate for this. Our school is paying assistant football coaches \$150 per week, the Head Coach \$200 per week during the playoffs.

How much money will you have for your program? We are all facing budget cuts these days, which means money is even more important to discuss! A few ways schools do it: each sport gets a certain amount of money allotted to coaches they spend as they need, school has an overall athletic budget, school gives football a certain amount and rest is covered by boosters, etc. It is very important to have an understanding of how the money works. Do you have to

fundraise for transportation, or is that covered? Do you have to pay to use the field during the summer or no? What about an overnight camp you might want to have? How is this funded? Can you do your own fundraising to buy the “over and above things?” Get as much information as possible about the financial details of the football program at this new school. My budget was once nailed for the reconditioning of helmets twice in one year! I had to pay for the last guy who failed to send in the helmets right after the season, so I had to pay the bill in August; and then I had to pay when I got the helmets my team used eight months later. I also had to raise money for a storage container at one school. \$2500 we had never talked about before I took the job. Would it have been a deal breaker? No, but it would have told me a LOT about the way money was handled.

## **5. The Facilities**

At Linfield Christian in Temecula, we put in a 1.2 million dollar beautiful Field Turf field in my first year as their Head Coach. Three years later when I went to Capo, we practiced on one of the worst grass fields I've ever seen! And we had to drive about a half of mile to get there as it was on another schools campus. Again, something I didn't investigate enough. I knew they played their games off campus, but didn't know about the practice situation. That was a big



headache I had to deal with. Not ideal at all to get in your car every day and transport EVERYTHING you need for a football practice. That's when I had to go and raise money for a storage shed for us to have at that facility. There was no vision to have something like that there because "it was never done before." You see, they used to practice right on campus, on a nice field, and I knew about that. But then the board decided to remove about half of the field because they put a driveway through that part of campus. Talk about a game changer!

Find out about the game facility, the practice facility, the weight room, the locker room, everything you can think of facility wise. Is there field hockey that you share the field with during the Fall? Junior high football games to deal with? Frosh, JV and Varsity have how many fields to use? Where do you practice when the frosh team has a 3 pm game? There are a lot of issues! If you don't HAVE to have the job, facilities might be something that turns you away. Facilities can be one of those BIG headaches if not done the right way.

## **6. The Philosophy**

What is the overarching philosophy of the school board and administration about athletics? Is athletics something they do, or someone they are? HUGE

difference! This philosophy of where athletics fits on a high school campus starts at the top, with the board of the school and works its way down. You can have administrators who don't buy in to the vision of the school board, but ultimately, the board will win that. You can have an immediate supervisor in an athletic director who has athletics as a priority on campus, but if the "real decision makers" on campus don't agree with his vision, it will not matter.

Does their philosophy play out with decisions on a daily basis? For instance, do they really want to build a football program and do what it takes to make that happen? Does the school have a philosophy to get as many coaches on campus as possible, or do they rely on walk ons? If their philosophy is to get coaches on campus jobs, is it happening? Is the proof in the pudding? These philosophical issues are major in your football program. What is the philosophy of multi-sport athletes and how does that play out on campus? Again, this comes down to philosophy. Make sure their philosophy matches yours.

Here's a good one which was a deal breaker for me at one school I interviewed at. I left saying, "If they offer the job, I won't accept it." Told my wife that same thing that night. The school's philosophy was that no extra-curricular

activities could take up more than 2 hours per day. No sports teams, no drama rehearsals, no debate clubs, nothing! Totally impractical! I can agree with no more than 2 hours on the field. But this included weight room, field time, film time, meeting time, etc. No more than 2 hours together on any given day. The only exception was travel time and games. Obviously, travel time and games will take more than two hours. I gave them an example of a Monday: 60 minutes in the weight room, 60 minutes in the film room, 20 minute team meeting, 90 minutes on the field. This is a total of almost four hours on Monday, our biggest day of the week. They laughed at it. I knew our philosophies didn't match. They were 0-10 this year (2012) . . . .

## **7. THE AREA**

Is this an area you want to raise your family? Do you see yourself living in this area for three years, five years, ten years, or twenty years? What are you willing to sacrifice to live in the area this school is in? My wife and I have been trying to get a job out in Texas since about 2006. We would love to raise our family there, for a variety of reasons. But it's difficult for a California boy to beat a good old Texas boy for a job! I mean, that's what makes Texas high school football the best in the nation right? I was close in 2006, was a finalist on a job.

Beat out 105 guys, lost to one. They flew my wife and I out there first class, only time I'd ever been in first class ever! Booster Club took us out one night. When the principal dropped me off at the airport, his last words were "Now Chris, if you don't win after a few years, we will be replacing you!" I loved it!

Back to the subject at hand – the job might be a good job, but will the area be a good fit for your family, and just as important, is the area a good crop for football players? Is football important in the area? Does your school have a football reputation in the area or is there another school in the area the "football school?"

## **8. Opportunity**

Sometimes, you want to just take any head coaching opportunity to get yourself in to that "head coaching world." What you really need to consider when thinking about that next job is "is this a good opportunity for my career?"

Sometimes you do have to be selfish, which kind of goes against what coaches teach and preach most of the time. But the bottom line is that you have to do what is best for your career sometimes. Will this opportunity get you closer to your end goal? That is the question you need to use to filter your decision. I often regret leaving Linfield Christian in 2006. The main reason I did it was

because I was very weary of the classroom, and I wanted to become an Athletic Director. The AD there at Linfield was married to the Superintendent, so I knew that wasn't going to happen. Football wise, I was in a really great spot with a program we had really been able to do good things with. I went to a school that ended up dropping to 8 man football after being there five years, mainly because of the enrollment, and things behind the scenes I didn't know about. In many ways, quite honestly, that killed my coaching career for a little while. When I started looking elsewhere, all of a sudden, I was an 8 man coach. I had only done it one year, with ten years of 11 man coaching, but you are only as good as your last job.

So, you really need to judge whether or not this move is a good opportunity not just for the short term, but the long term as well. Y-O-U are the only one who knows that.

## **9. Tools**

What do you have at your fingertips to build the program of your dreams? Does the school have what it takes for you to do what you want to do? If they don't, do they have the financial commitment to buy those things? Again, I refer to Linfield Christian where I first became a Head Coach. I would buy twenty four

footballs per year there. I LOVE having a lot of footballs around. And I like them to be nice. We would usually break out two new balls per week, and turn two old ones in to kicking balls, or give them to JV. When I went to CVCS, they said “We ordered you five footballs for next year, one more than we ordered last year.” I literally laughed out loud, I thought it was a joke. But what I realized is the last coach only asked for that many balls. When I asked for more, they bought them. When I asked the parents for money for a new digital video editing system, one parent stepped up and wrote a check. Those are tools.

I also consider the student-athletes on your campus as tools for your program. Are the tools there? I once hired a coach who came in and I would refer to “the kids here.” He stopped me one day and said “Coach, kids are kids, it doesn’t matter where you are.” A few years later, he agreed with me, “the kids here are different” he agreed. Does this job have kids that make football players? Let’s face it, sometimes schools don’t have the Jimmys OR the Joes! Make sure you know what kind of tools you will have.

## **10. The Family**

**(My wife just saw my list and said “I’m glad that I’m number 10!! As I told her, these are in no specific order!)**

Is this a good move for your family? You know what they say “Happy wife, happy life!” Will your wife be okay with this move, if you are married? What are the positive and negative things for your family with this move? For instance, at this school I just started at in June as the Athletic Director and Varsity Football Special Teams Coach, I’m now literally two minutes away from school. And my son who started kindergarten this year, his school is between our house and my high school. Talk about a LOT of convenience. Before this job, as a married couple, I had never lived closer than a thirty minute drive to work. We’ve been married almost nine years! So, this move has been really great for our family. The other thing is I’m making the same here in Victorville salary wise for my Athletic Director job as I did in South Orange County. (If you know California, you know how huge this is!) Again, a game changer for my family.

Men, we don’t always think of our families in our moves and career decisions, but you need to think of them in long and short term ways. How many moves can your kids handle in and out of schools? How many social groups can your wife change in and out of before she is over moving to support your career goals? These are very, very important things to consider!

I put this as my fifth key because I think it is important to have this story at the end of your cover letter. One last paragraph that will catch their attention, and make them consider you if they had not yet considered you to this point!



**99 QUESTIONS TO ASK TO GET TO KNOW YOUR PROSPECTIVE SCHOOL**

- 1 Who was the last head coach?
- 2 Why is the last head coach gone?
- 3 How did he do last year? Last 3 years? Last 5 years?
- 4 What areas did former head coach succeed in?
- 5 What areas did former head coach struggle with?
- 6 What is the salary?
- 7 What are the benefits?
- 8 What kind of retirement benefits are there?
- 9 Does your district give tenure to teachers/coaches? If so, how does that work?
- 10 Who will be my immediate supervisor?
- 11 How will I be evaluated as a coach?
- 12 Who is responsible for hiring and firing my staff?
- 13 Is there a stipend for coaching? If so, how much is it?
- 14 Where do most of your faculty/staff live?
- 15 What are his assistants doing? Staying or going?
- 16 How many assistants are on campus with jobs as faculty/staff?
- 17 Can you remove any of them if you deem it necessary?
- 18 Can you hire any coaches for faculty/staff jobs on campus?

- 19 How many coaches are on the staff?
- 20 How much are the coaches paid?
- 21 Do I have control over how much the coaches are paid?
- 22 Do you compensate coaches for spring and or summer practice?
- 23 Can I charge kids for summer camp participation and pay coaches out of this income?
- 24 Can I have a camp for the community to help raise funds for the program, coaching staff?
- 25 Are there any built in raises on a year to year basis?
- 26 Any financial compensation for playoffs?
- 27 Is there a budget for video production of games/highlight videos?
- 28 What kind of video equipment is currently being used? Hudl account?
- 29 What kind of computer lab availability is there for the team?
- 30 Where does the team watch film and hold meetings?
- 31 What kind of transportation is used for the team to get to games?
- 32 Is there a van available for the equipment?
- 33 Is there a rooster bus to transport fans to games?
- 34 Do the cheerleaders ride with the team? If that has been done in the past, can we separate them for next year?
- 35 What is superintendent's commitment to athletics?
- 36 Does the principal support athletics by attending games and communicating with coaches?

- 37 What is the budget for football like?
- 38 Do you have input with the budget on an annual basis?
- 39 What fundraising is necessary to fund the things you want to do?
- 40 Who pays for reconditioning helmet/shoulder pads? School or Boosters?
- 41 Who pays for new uniforms when they are needed? School or Boosters?
- 42 What does the current equipment inventory look like?
- 43 How old are the current uniforms and when will new ones be bought?
- 44 Is there a football specific logo?
- 45 If not, can I create one for marketing purposes?
- 46 What has been done in terms of leadership development for the players in the program over the last 3 years?
- 47 Is there money for staff development from the school budget? Clinics? Hotel/food/transportation?
- 48 Where are the home games played?
- 49 Can I tour the facility?
- 50 What are the locker room facilities like?
- 51 Is there a place for coaches to use as a locker room/changing facilities?
- 52 How far is the locker room from the field?
- 53 Is there a field house for pregame, halftime?
- 54 What is the press box facility like?

- 55 How many coaches can fit in the press box facility for my team?
- 56 Is there a good place to film from at the press box? Is it covered?  
Electricity available close by?
- 57 What other teams use the facility/field?
- 58 When do they practice during the football season?
- 59 Do other teams use the field/facility during the summer? If so, when?
- 60 Do any youth football programs use the field/facility during the  
football season? If so, when?
- 61 Who is responsible for securing game management like the chain crew  
and officials?
- 62 Who is responsible for field set up like sideline markers? Chains? Goal  
post pads?
- 63 Who is responsible for hydration?
- 64 Is there an athletic trainer? If so, how is he/she involved in the  
football program?
- 65 Student athletics trainers available for the football program?
- 66 If no trainer, how are injuries dealt with and who supervises the  
medical side of things?
- 67 Who has the team doctor been? Is he/she planning on returning?  
Contact info?
- 68 Who has been the Booster Club president/officers?
- 69 What is the Booster Club management like?
- 70 Can I get a copy of the Booster Club by laws?
- 71 What kind of politics are happening right now in the Booster Club?

- 72** How much money is in the Booster Club account currently? Any outstanding expenses?
- 73** Can I mandate that my football players and their families help to fundraise?
- 74** Is there a youth football “feeder” program for our program?
- 75** If so, what programs naturally feed in to our program?
- 76** Is there a junior high school that feeds in to our high school?
- 77** If so, what school is that and what kind of relationship does our football staff have there?
- 78** What kind of rules are there at this school, the league, the section, the state regarding recruiting kids to our school and football program?
- 79** What kind of volunteers are currently invested in the program?
- 80** What does someone need to do in order to volunteer for the program?
- 81** Is there someone who oversees the stat-keeping? If so, who is it?
- 82** Is there an equipment manager? If so, who is it?
- 83** What are the minimum scholastic requirements in order to be involved in athletics?
- 84** Who monitors the grades of the football players?
- 85** How often are the grades monitored and used for eligibility?
- 86** Has the team had a study hall historically?
- 87** What have the practice hours been traditionally?
- 88** Are there any restrictions on practice? School, league, conference rules regarding practice?

- 89 Is there a weight room facility? If so, can I see it? If not, what plans are there?
- 90 How does your school deal with multi-sport athletes?
- 91 Can I mandate that my football players lift weights year round?
- 92 Can I mandate that my football players attend a summer program?
- 93 Who has the final say on the players who participate in my program?
- 94 Is there a strength and conditioning coach?
- 95 How is the school enrollment doing?
- 96 What attracts kids to this school?
- 97 What deters kids from coming here?
- 98 What is the administration doing to attract the top student-athletes in the area?
- 99 Which sport is this school known for? How is that sport doing currently?

### **3 TIPS TO GET ALONG GREAT WITH YOUR ATHLETIC DIRECTOR**

#### **1. Communication, communication, communication**

The most important thing that you can do in order to get along great with your Athletic Director is to communicate. Most Athletic Directors are very busy. They are either teachers who have a small window every day to get their athletic duties done, or they are administrators who have vice principal duties nagging at their time all day. Do your best to answer their emails and phone calls right away. Most of the time an Athletic Director is trying to reach you, it is very important and it is time sensitive. So, communicate in a timely fashion with your AD to stay in his good graces.

I once had to have an answer about a trip that a team wanted to take, an overnight trip out of the area. There was one question on a form that the head coach didn't answer. Well, I got that form about five minutes before our administrative meeting where this trip would need to be approved, to go on the board meeting agenda that very night. If not on the board meeting agenda for final approval (they approved all overnight trips), the team would not be going on this trip because there wasn't another board meeting before the trip date.

First area the head coach messed up there, he failed to turn the form in to me in a timely fashion for me to review it and clear up any questions I might have

had. So, that was poor written communication right there. I returned his email with the trip request about three minutes after he sent it saying “Call me right away on this trip request.” Then, about a minute later, five minutes before my admin meeting, I called him and said “We have to talk about this field trip, call me back ASAP coach.” Then, I texted him my question about the information I needed. I didn’t hear back from the coach for about three hours. The meeting was only two and a half hours. We couldn’t get the admin approval during that meeting to get it on the board meeting agenda. That is just one example of very poor communication from a head coach – poor written and poor verbal communication.

## **2. Understand the BIGGER picture**

Your program is only one of many, many programs on campus. I’m not just talking about athletics; I’m talking about the choir program, and wood shop program, and performing arts program, and the band program and the ASB. I have worked with coaches who think that their program is the ONLY one on campus that matters. And I’ve been guilty of that myself before I became an Athletic Director, when I was a Head Football Coach. MY program was the MOST important one on campus!



Your AD is being pulled in a LOT of different directions! One way you can get along well with him is by understanding your program is one of many on campus. Sometimes, his hands are tied, and he simply cannot help you with your request because there is a conflict with the glee club. The vice principal overseeing that club is fighting for her group just like your AD is fighting for you. But sometimes he has to lose battles, and sometimes administrators over him make decisions that negatively impact YOUR program in order to help another one. What you need to realize when this happens is that your program is just a small piece of the pie. Remember that, and help your AD out by understanding that, and not being a pain in his rear about something that didn't work out in your favor for the sake of another program.

Remember this about his or her time as well. Although you might have time in your day to drop by his office just to hang out before your practice begins, he might have forty five things to do that afternoon. Remembering the big picture will help you to help your AD. Let's say you are a Fall sport coach. Can you help your AD out at a few basketball games during the winter? Or maybe run the clock at some baseball or softball games in the Spring? You have no idea how

just volunteering a few hours out of season to support your AD accomplish his BIG picture job will do for your relationship.

### **3. Be Responsible**

Listen, your AD is always going to want to have your back, especially if he hired you. You running your program the right way, and being responsible is going to make him or her look good. Just like anybody else, an AD wants to look good to his superiors, and he wants to keep the “problems” off the principal’s desk as much as possible. Remember, if the principal didn’t hire you, he won’t be as invested IN you as the AD is. You’re “just a coach” and very replaceable in the eyes of a principal. Keep the principal’s inbox clear of any complaints about YOUR program.

Be a responsible coach, and this will go a long way with your AD. He has got to be able to trust you. Turn the lights off in the gym, keep the batting cages locked up when you aren’t there, make sure your football players aren’t getting changed out by their cars in front of the whole school, finish practice when your calendar says practice will end, don’t let kids practice that aren’t cleared to practice, put teaching in front of winning, do not lose personal checks for practice gear, remember to thank the school board in your banquet speech, clean up the

trash under your benches, don't forget your catcher's gear at the rivals school, follow transportation guidelines, stop letting coaches who aren't cleared yet around the kids and so on and so on and so on. (And yes, every single one of these become headaches to your AD. They can all be resolved by Head Coaches who are more responsible for your program.

Your AD doesn't want to micromanage your program. He doesn't want to be called in to his boss' office because you aren't being responsible in how you run your program. Just do your job, be a responsible coach, this is another great way to stay on "the good side" of your AD.

## **YOUR FIRST 30 DAYS ON THE JOB**

This is a document that I take with me to my interview for head football coach positions. It tells the panel that I know what I'm doing, and that I have a plan to get things going right away!

### **Tasks for first 30 days as Head Football Coach**

- Meet with stakeholders
  - Administration – one on one
  - Athletic Director – one on one
  - Assistant Coaches – one on one (within first week)
  - Players – each class by grade level; one on one with every player
  - Faculty and Staff – one group of four-six
  - Boosters/Alumni – one group of six-eight
- Survey all stakeholders via SurveyMonkey.com
- Evaluate and recommend changes to football website
- Launch/re-launch social media for Warrior Football
- Budget meeting - Analyze 2011-12 budget; Get briefed on 2012-13 budget
- Develop Spring/Summer 2014 calendar
- Evaluate game schedules for 2014 and 2015; begin work to complete schedules
- Tour and evaluate game and practice facilities; risk management issues
- Meet with Admissions/Financial Aid Departments to learn their process
- Get acquainted with league by-laws, procedures, meeting schedule, officers, etc.
- Evaluate equipment inventory; determine needs list for 2014-15 (if not done yet)

Day 30 (or so) – Coaches meeting to cast vision for the future of the Warrior Football, and share findings of stakeholder meetings, surveys

## **DON'T TAKE A JOB LIKE THIS: ONE COACH'S BAD EXPERIENCE**

I received an email from a coach who I've worked with for a few months now as he is preparing for a head coach gig. When he shared with me about his experience with a school during the last month, I thought that it would make good educational reading for the rest of us.

I speak with coaches nationwide regarding the job search process as part of my **consulting business**. I hope you learn some things here about the process of becoming a head football coach! Obviously, I'm leaving the coach's name and the name of the school where he interviewed out of this. Heck, we even agreed to keep the state out of it.

Dear Coach Fore,

**I wanted to share my recent experience interviewing for a varsity head coach position with a school in the south.**

A little background: I have been a varsity assistant coach for eight years and recently gained my teaching certificate with a social studies endorsement. A few weeks back I was contacted by this school about a social studies and head varsity coaching position.

Needless to say, I was extremely excited. After a phone and online interview, I was invited to come visit the school and meet with administration. Since I live in the Northwest, it would be a significant investment to drive 13+ hours each way but I eagerly agreed anyway. **(Worth noting: the school would not reimburse me for travel expenses.)**

When I arrived at the school I met with the superintendent, athletic director, and principal (whom I first interviewed with). It wasn't until this face to face visit that I learned more information about the position.

First, resources and finances were extremely limited. I knew ahead of time that this was a small school but I was informed that the budget for the program was less than \$1,200.

Next, I was told that there were three members of my staff who were teachers in the building. **I was required to keep them on as varsity coaches because their coaching salary was tied to their teaching contract.** Essentially, they were going to be varsity coaches as long as they felt like it. Finally, **I was told that there were three non-teachers who would be required to be on staff** because “They are strong community members and it would be smart for the program.”

Like many assistants, I have always wanted to be a varsity head coach. **With that said, everything about this position just felt wrong and I eventually told them no.** Many reading this may think I’m crazy for doing so but I went with my gut feeling and truly do not regret it.

If nothing else, I gained valuable experience and learned valuable lessons:

**Ask questions.**

Coach Fore has **posted numerous articles** about **questions to ask** before taking over a program. I asked many of those questions but was either given a non-answer (“Let us get back with you on that”) or found their answer unsatisfactory.

**Know how much control you’ll have over staff.**

I was told by more than one of my coaching friends that no staff control is a kiss of death.

**Trust your gut.**

If everything inside of you is telling you not to take a job, then don't. Once I was able to remove myself from the fantasy of running my own program, I was that the reality was pretty scary.

I don't know if I'll ever receive another opportunity to run my own program. But in the event I do, it will be when it feels right.

Thank you!

Coach (Name left off intentionally!)