



12 Lessons Learned as a First Year Head Football Coach

[Football Coaching Podcast S04 Episode 1](#)

1) Get Organized First.

You won't have time to organize once you get to work with the players, parents, fundraising, etc. Get your office, equipment room, and plan in order before you dive headfirst into taking action (you've got a couple of days, tops).

2) Give Ownership to Your Players.

We created Squad Leaders, an idea I got from Rick Stewart at allaccesscoaching.com. The players grew into leadership roles we gave them. Without handing over leadership, very few players will ever show leadership ability.

3) Inventory Everything.

The biggest headache in being a head coach is fundraising and finances. The biggest leak in finances is equipment walking away. We put a heavy emphasis on inventorying every piece of cloth, leather and plastic in the program after spending a big chunk of the 2018 budget replacing lost items.

4) Order Everything You Need Early.

Some items are just going to be necessary. You need to replace worn out gear. Items that wear out or must be replaced every year like footballs, mouthpieces, etc. need to be planned for. Figure out your budget early, then work to meet those expenses.

5) Never Buy All-White Uniforms.

They look awesome. But cleaning all-white uniforms (emphasis on *white game pants*) is a nightmare. This year was the worst football season in terms of rain I can remember. How convenient.



6) Order Super Ball Dry.

I had never heard of the stuff. But after the worst weather year in a long time, I know what it is now. We made do without it, and you can hear all about that in my podcast on [Coaching Football in the Rain](#). But Super Ball Dry needs to be on your list.

7) Ignore Everyone. Thick Skin Isn't Enough.

Stay away from negative people. Whether they are players, parents, community or admin. Yes, you need thick skin. You also need to avoid the negative so that it doesn't creep into your coaching. And there will be negative opinions of you or your coaching at times. No matter how good your team is.

8) Keep Your Scheme Very Simple.

I made a critical observation in the playoffs this year. The top 3 teams in our Region Playoffs (and I never saw #4 play) had one thing in common. You could watch film from Week 1 or film from Week 12, and you were going to see the same offense and defense. These coaches aren't changing everything from week to week.

9) Set Hard Limits on Practice Time.

You will get what you need to get done in the time you allow. With a small team, it was vital to limit practice time so that we were fresh for games. Our practices were limited to 90 minutes on the field at most, Monday through Thursday. We got everything done.

10) Demand the Weight Room.

Players will give you what you demand. And what they see you treating as important. When the head coach says the weight room is important, and never shows up in it - the players stop seeing it as important. Part of only practice for 60-90 minutes on the field, was to make sure we got 30 minutes in the weight room twice a week.



11) Put the Emphasis on Top Priorities.

You can't do everything. You will get what you demand (again). Put the emphasis on top priorities in terms of your practice time, and your coaching points. If you emphasize tackling, you'll get better tackling. If you emphasize tackling, takeaways, block destruct, and pass drops all at the same time... you might not. If tackling is the most important thing for your defense, and you haven't mastered it yet, keep the emphasis there.

12) Be Very Specific in Coaching Staff Jobs.

This goes back to organization. Write down every single job that you can think of, for the entire year. Then assign it to a coach. If you've only got one or two coaches to start, assign jobs between them and yourself. Then replace yourself (or your assistants) with new coaches as you make hires. But this needs to be in place from the start. It's harder to give staff members additional responsibility, than it is to move responsibility to another staff member.