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What It Takes to Be a Successful Football Program

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What It Takes to Be a Successful Football Program

Austin P. Thompson

Murray State University

BIS 437 Spring 2018

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Abstract

This research paper explores the basis of what it takes to be a successful football program. In this paper, the reader will find that research was conducted on the topic above. The content of this research paper is to inform a person what it takes to be a successful football program. While there are many teams throughout college football, only a few have long-term success. These programs are what are considered to be successful football programs. Many teams may experience short-term success but they cannot sustain the long-term success that other programs have had and continue to have. After this paper, the reader should be able to process the key features that make a football program successful. By analyzing the key points made in this research paper, the reader should be able to have a better insight of what these programs are and how they are constructed.

Introduction

What if someone told you they knew everything it took to be a successful football program? As enticing as it may sound, very few people actually know what it takes to be a successful program with long-lasting effects. Various research has been done to try to find an answer to this question. After researching the topic at hand, many factors have been found that help make a program successful. These small factors become part of larger pieces that can help aid in finding the answer to the question, “What does it take to become a successful football program?” These factors act as building blocks towards constructing a successful football program. Very few programs are ready built for success, which means success comes from building upon the small things that can accompany success to eventually reach the goal.

The basis of this research paper is based on the word “successful”. Different programs may look at success in a different light. Some teams can consider success as winning more than half of their games and finishing over five hundred. Other teams consider a successful year to be one without any of the program’s players being injured. While these can be claimed successes by some programs, the type of success that this paper is aiming for is, above all, winning, but also being able to win year in and year out while contending for a national championship. As stated above, there are very few programs who have actually been able to sustain this type of success. These programs will be the ones focused on for the duration of this paper in order to rationalize what these specific programs do to set them ahead of all the rest of the programs.

Thesis

If the answer to the question, “What does it take to be a successful football program?”, was an easy answer then every school would have a successful football program. Unfortunately, it is not an easy answer and programs have been searching for this solution since college football began. The aim of this paper is to ensure that the reader will have a full understanding of key concepts that are major components of what it takes to be a successful football program on a continuous scale. These key concepts include, but are not limited to, having support from the program itself, having superior recruitment and players, having a good supporting staff of coaches, and finally having a head coach who is capable of being successful in their own right.

Understanding What Success Means

When searching for the keys to success, you must first understand what the word successful means. Successful is an adjective, which is used to support an outcome of an attempt of any accomplishable goal. *The Webster Dictionary* defines the word success as accomplishing an aim or purpose (Webster 2006). The aim and purpose of success, pertaining to this paper, is creating a college football team that is contending for a national championship every year. Now that an understanding of the word successful has been established, and we know that the goal is to win in a repetitive way. It must now be put into the question in theory and challenged by the research that went into this paper. As stated above, the question is, “What does it take to be a successful football program?”.

What does it take to be a successful football program? After conducting research to this question, it is obvious that one cannot pinpoint any one thing that makes a program successful. Instead of just one tangible factor, it takes countless small factors that in combination, make a solution for success and a reachable goal at hand. These small factors, however, can be combined to form the essential platforms of what a successful football program is made of.

The Program Itself

The first platform in building and maintaining a successful football program is the program within itself. In order to be successful, it is imperative to have a program that doesn't expect anything less than said success. Many factors of what a successful program is made of will be displayed in this paper. The paper will also cover examples of programs who do not set the program in a good position to be successful and how damaging this can be to the success of the program.

The first platform of being a successful football program is the program itself. This is a huge factor due the different ways and variances in how different programs treat their football teams. It is possible to find some schools that worship their football teams and the football program is king at the school. Then you may also find schools such as The University of Duke, that is primarily known for their basketball program. Since the success of their basketball program is high, they tend to leave the football program in the shadows and do not pay as much attention to it. The amount of time and money that a football team can dedicate to their football program can be a huge factor in this platform. It sounds dirty to say that due to all the violation and infractions that have occurred lately, but a program can spend money on their football team without actually paying the players directly.

Instead, they can use their money to compensate players in the way of upgrades to the program itself.

Team Facilities

One way the program can use their funds in a constructive way is by constantly upgrading the team facilities. Tallahassee, Florida is home to The University of Florida, a program that has always been known for their success on the gridiron. Recently the team spent two hundred fifty-two million dollars on renovating their team facilities. Jessop (2014) stated, “FSU unveiled new facilities for its football program, including a new locker room, players' lounge, team meeting room and coaches’ suite.” The upgrades are part of FSU's “Champion Campaign”, which is a \$250-million fundraising initiative aimed at enhancing the school's "athletic facilities”. These new renovations were set in place to aspire young athletes to choose Florida State University over other schools that may be trying to acquire them (Jessop, 2014). This is a tactic to sway the young athletes in FSU’s direction when they are choosing the college to make their homes for the next four years. This is exactly the type of facilities that a program has to have in order to bring in the highly talented recruits.

Besides team facilities, a program can also focus on having a state of the art stadium, in which to play their home games. A program that has a decent sized stadium with accommodations for the team may entice a player to choose that school. Deep in the heart of Tennessee, lies the University of Tennessee. This is where Rocky Top football happens. The Tennessee Volunteers have constantly been upgrading Neyland Stadium in order to make it shine like a new penny in the eyes of their players and fans. The university plans on upgrading the stadium, even more, starting before the 2018 season. Ohm (2017)

stated that “A three hundred and forty-million-dollar renovation of Neyland Stadium now includes additional funding for improvements to the south end of the stadium” (Ohm, 2017).

The reason for the upgrades and large amounts of money spent is to make the stadium stand out in order to impress new recruits coming to visit campus for a tour. This may seem like something that may not make much of difference, but in the recruit’s eyes, it is a whole new world that they have never encountered. And it is imperative to make a good impression on these young athletes. Improving your stadium is key to helping your program become successful. Having an immaculate stadium can improve attendance, as well as serve as a way to make a good impression on possible future recruits. There are some programs that never make improvements to their stadium. These schools’ stadiums may be outdated and do not have the flash that the newly renovated Neyland Stadium has. This can hurt your program when fans, students, and incoming athletes compare the outdated stadiums to the improved stadiums that successful football programs have.

Having a superior stadium is a simple tactic to break down. If a player has a choice to play at a school with a profound stadium, as opposed to a stadium that is outdated, then naturally, the player is going to gravitate towards the school with the better stadium.

Along with stadium upgrades, schools can offer different incentives in the way of football athletic facilities. These are special places that only the football players have access to. In Tuscaloosa, Alabama, there is a place called the University of Alabama. This university boasts its prize possession: The Alabama Crimson Tide Football Team. The university has taken great pride in their state of the art facilities. These facilities are meant to help players feel like they have a home and to persuade incoming freshman to choose the

university to be their home for the next four years. Stine (2013) stated, “The Alabama Crimson Tide facilities include; state of the art practice facilities, fitness center, video rooms, conference rooms, locker rooms and offices, arcade games, pool tables, and to top it all off they have thirty-foot-long hot tubs” (Stine, 2013).

These may just seem like bells and whistles, but it serves a purpose to entice recruits. How many teenagers are going to turn amenities like that down? This is just one small reason why the University of Alabama has such a successful recruiting class year in and year out. Some schools do not emphasize on things such as these special team facilities or just simply do not have the money. However, if they do not have the resources to compete with team facilities such as Alabama, then they are in a losing battle. These can be valuable assets in becoming a successful football program. For example, in Los Angeles, California, at the University of California, Los Angeles, there is a power five caliber football program, but they lack superior amenities for their athletics that programs like The University of Alabama have. The UCLA Bruins do not even have a stadium to call their own. The Bruins play their home games at the Rose Bowl which is located thirty minutes from campus. UCLA shares the Rose Bowl with other colleges, high schools, and professional teams. This is really a “no place to truly call home” situation. In addition to not having a stadium of their own, the Bruins have subpar facilities that include a practice field that is only eighty yards long for their players to train, study, or escape from the headaches of college. In an interview with UCLA head coach Jim Mora, the coach explained that the team’s practice facilities were good but could use some improvement to help impress new recruits. Daughters (2014) stated, “Our facilities are nice. But it is like an arms race with other programs, and we only get a limited time to impress new players.

You want to provide an environment where your players can have the most success possible”.

Having these kinds of facilities puts programs at a disadvantage when trying to recruit against other programs that have greater amenities and vice-versa. That is the reason that successful football programs like the Alabama Crimson Tide have no problem boasting their state of the art facilities to incoming freshman. There are so many ways that the tactic of having nicer facilities increases the number of five-star recruits that a school like Alabama, can get as opposed to schools who do not have the nicest facilities. Getting the best recruits is a stepping stone to becoming a successful football program.

Fan Base

Another subcategory of the program is the fan base. Every school is going to have their fans that come to every game, no matter the size or success of the school. But there are very few teams that keep their bleachers full every weekend. The schools that do this show their loyalty to their program, whether it is the student body, alumni, or just people who love the team. This may seem as if it doesn't matter, but there is always a special spark when you are playing in a stadium that is jammed pack as opposed to playing in an empty stadium. Some fans are even loyal enough to travel to every away game. This also comes with a sense of gratitude to know that you are playing for a fan base that is willing to travel hundreds of miles while spending “x” amount of dollars just to watch their team play regardless of the outcome.

For example, in Ohio lies Ohio State University. The Buckeyes, year in and year out, have a playoff contending team. They also have one of the best fan bases in the country. The Buckeyes have the highest all game total attendance of any team in the

country. The Buckeye faithful have an approximate total yearly average of one point three million in attendance for every game they play, home or away (Kirk, 2016) (This can be seen in Appendix A). This shows the level of commitment to the players and coaching staff that is unmatched by most schools in the country. Most teams are irrelevant without a good supporting cast of fans. The schools who have poor attendance are at a disadvantage purely because they have less to play for. They do not have thousands of people filling their seats during home games and have even less that actually travels with the team.

Boston, Massachusetts is the home of Boston University. They had the worst attendance rate of any power five school last year, at an approximate average of thirty-four thousand. Research by, Solomon (2015) showed that the University of Boston football attendance has dropped in each of the last five years and remains at an all-time low. This is less than a fraction of Ohio State University's attendance rate. The outcome of this scenario is, obviously, that Boston University has never been known for their success on the football field (Solomon, 2015). They do not have as much to play for as the Buckeyes do. When a program has a stadium that is packed and has a fan base that has traveled for miles to watch the school play, then the program has a sense of urgency to win or else the players feel like they will let the fans down. This gives an added spark to a program and acts as an extra incentive to win. It should be clear to see the importance of the fan base and how it can help make a successful football program

Tradition

Another level of the program that a school should have to be successful is tradition. Every school has their own traditions, but the traditions that are going to be talked about in this paper pertain to the gridiron variety. It brings a little something special to the program

when the school has deep traditions and roots to the football program. Every top program has a special tradition that they perform that can get a crowd on their feet in order to get them pumped for a game.

Tailgating

A huge tradition in some programs is the tailgating. Hundreds of people surrounding the field, some equipped with their campers and RVs. Smoke filling the air with the scent of smoked sausages and cheeseburgers. The sound of children, pretending to be their favorite player, as they play a game of two-hand touch. Tailgating is a tradition where you can meet lifelong friends. It may seem like a tradition that has no effect on the outcome of the game, but it is hard to imagine a team being very successful without hundreds of fans lining the parking lot hours before the game starts. It just seems to go together: successful football and tailgating.

In Game Traditions

Besides the tailgating, programs have pregame or in-game traditions that will be part of the program until no end. A few examples are the relentless cowbells of Mississippi State University, running through the Power T in Knoxville and the Script of Ohio State University. While all of these traditions are special, in their own way, there is one tradition that actually brings athletes to the program and sets the mood better than any of the other traditions in college football. This tradition is the entrance of the Clemson Tigers into Death Valley.

Deep in the heart of Clemson, South Carolina lies the University of Clemson. This is also home to Death Valley, one of the loudest stadiums in college football (Khatoun, 2014). Death Valley has one of the most sacred pregame traditions in college football.

When Death Valley's Memorial Stadium was reconstructed, they left out an entrance from the Tiger's locker room that leads directly to the field. So, after the team straps their pads and laces their cleats they walk out of their locker room and enter three charter buses. The charter buses do a complete circle around the whole stadium, where rowdy tailgaters scream for their team. They finally arrive at their destination, which is the north side of the stadium. Once the team gets to this point, the whole Tiger football team lines up at the top of a hill where, what has been called, the most exciting twenty-five seconds of college football happens. The hill is a one-hundred-and-fifty-foot slope that the team runs down. Each player from the team touches Howard's Sacred Rock, located at the top of the hill. After everyone touches Howard's Rock, they launch themselves down the hill, jumping and howling like wild banshees (Siegal, 2017). USA Today ranked the most exciting entrances to college football and gave the Clemson Tigers the number one spot. In this article Siegal (2017) talks about how exciting of an experience it is and hints that at Clemson they sure know how to make an entrance to pump up its home crowd. This is why they call it the most exciting twenty-five seconds of football. It is a tradition that is unmatched by most programs in the country, and while it may be a small factor of being a successful caliber program, it still boosts morale and creates an atmosphere that most unsuccessful programs do not have. (An image of the tradition can be seen in Appendix B)

Location

The last level of the program that has a bigger impact than it may seem is location. Location can have a lot to do with bringing in new recruits. Everyone inside the college football world knows the criticism that Florida Atlantic Head Coach, Lane Kiffin, has endured over the years of his coaching career. But despite all the criticism, he has landed a

job at Florida Atlantic University, which is in Florida. A report by the *Palm Beach Post* emphasized how Kiffin has been able to steal talent from other schools. Elaman (2017) stated that Kiffin was able to steal some of the top recruits from bigger Power Five schools last year during the recruiting process. One huge reason he was able to do this is the campus at Florida Atlantic University (Elaman, 2017). The school is basically located on the beach of the Atlantic Ocean. This is a huge bargaining chip to a freshman that comes in and realizes that his home for the next several months will be within walking distance of the beach.

Not every school can be located on the beach, but their locations do play a huge role in reeling in top recruits. Schools can range anywhere from the biggest cities in the United States to small-town U.S.A. These schools that are located in more rural areas are automatically at a disadvantage. The key is to consider walking in the athlete's shoes. Are they going to want to go to a school that has very little to do outside of the campus? Or are they going to want to attend a college where there are endless amounts of possibilities outside of the school?

For example, Iowa State University is located in Ames Iowa. Iowa State University is a Power Five School, but they do not always have a successful football program. One reason is the school's location. In his book, *The College Environment*, Astin (1968) explains the importance of students' behavior and how feelings of loneliness and isolation can often result in a mismatch between the students and the university (Astin, 1968). This can have a huge impact on whether or not an athlete is going to choose your school. If the location makes them feel isolated and lonely then they will go with another program where they feel there is more surrounding them outside of the campus for them to interact with.

For starters, unless the athlete resides from Iowa or the area around Iowa, there are not going to be many athletes that are going to want to spend their time in a rural area like Iowa. This serves as a huge hit to their recruiting process. Compared to other colleges, it is in a smaller, more rural city. This means that there is less for students to do outside of the school such as food, entertainment, and fewer people to meet. Not every athlete will take this into consideration, but most will.

Most schools that are highly successful are in good locations, or have good surrounding locations. Whether it be populated cities with abundant options for athletes to partake in, schools that have a more tropical climate location, or even a school that is not far from home, all of these factor into the location of the school and help the athletes make the decision to attend these schools with better locations. In return, being in a better location is used as a bargaining chip to persuade these five-star recruits to attend the program's university. This is huge in being a successful football program because if a program can have a good location that incoming recruits will feel comfortable in, then it will help to steal talent away from schools without good locations. This is only helping the successful football program with a great surrounding and hurting the unsuccessful football program who may not have as much to offer the students outside of the school. Having a great program location is a benefactor that can help make your team a successful football program because of the volume of athletes that will be interested in your school based purely on the location.

The points made above create the first building block of what it takes to be a successful football program. The first level of this building block is having a good location for the program. Great locations will persuade talent to choose that school over a school

with a location that is non-appealing to a teenager. The second level is the fan base. It is always encouraging knowing that a team is playing for fans that are dedicated to them and are willing to attend the game cheering them on, no matter what the fans have to do to be at the game. This includes traveling to away games that could be hundreds of miles from their homes. The third level of this first building block to becoming a successful football program is the traditions. These traditions, such as tailgating and pregame tradition, just seem to go hand and hand with successful football programs. And the opposite holds true that most unsuccessful football programs do not have the type of tradition that a successful program does. The final level of this building block is having superior team facilities. This is stated above and makes the player and incoming recruits feel important. Having state of the art facilities can be used as a recruiting method to persuade a student to pick that program over a program with inferior practice facilities. After conducting the research on the topic of this paper, it is apparent that these four levels set a sturdy foundation of what it takes to be a successful football program.

Players and Recruitment

The next level in the foundation to being a successful football program is the players and recruitment. The two go together because in order to get the players you have to recruit them. This is a very simple theory, but the process of recruiting is far more difficult than it may seem. This is a very important part of college football and being a successful program because without the players, it is very hard to play a game. However, there is more to the game than just having players there to play. Successful football programs have to have superior recruitment in order to put five-star talent at every position that they can possibly get.

Most successful football programs dominate the recruiting process. Football is a team sport, but it makes a world of difference when your team is led by highly talented players. This is the point at which the recruiters earn their paychecks. Recruiting takes a lot of time mixed in with a lot of traveling. In a sense, recruitment is almost an entirely different sport within itself. Recruiting has been considered to be one of the most cut-throat parts of college football. Most people can follow the recruiting process by their cellphones and school websites, but very few know what the recruiting process entails.

Every successful football program has to start with a head coach creating a game plan. From this game plan, a program can gauge what type of talent is needed in order to fulfill the needs of the team. The program then puts their recruiting team in motion by recruiting players that fit their game plan to play for the school. This may seem like an easy task, but programs compete with every other school in the country to persuade these young athletes to choose their program.

Recruiting Cycle

The relentless cycle of recruiting starts with a team of recruiters hired by the head coach. This team works closely with the coaching staff, trying to find new talent that fits their play scheme. Once they find talent, the recruitment department starts to get in contact with the potential recruits. After contact has been made, a meeting with the recruit is set up. These meetings between the program and the recruit can happen in many different ways and between many different people from the program. After the personal meetings have been established, the next step is to propose an invite to tour the school and all of the team facilities. Then the last step between the player and the recruitment process is the actual selection day where the recruit chooses what school he wants to go to.

The above steps in which the recruitment process takes place will be elaborated on in the next section of the paper to explain why this process is such an important step towards being a successful football program. The items talked about previously in the paper were all important pieces towards building the foundation of a successful program, but they are all intangible pieces. At this point in the process, it starts to be about tangible pieces. It becomes about the pieces that can actually be touched and felt, and also the things that a person building a successful football program can control. The next section of the paper will cover ways in which current successful football programs approach the recruitment process to acquire top-notch athletes. It will also touch on ways that unsuccessful football programs try to keep up with superior programs in the daunting task known as recruitment.

The Steps of Recruiting a Player

In his blog, Berkman (2015) researches the biggest steps in the college recruiting process. The steps that are displayed start with contact between recruits and the program. It is then followed by visits from coaches and campus visits. The last step is scholarship offers and signing a letter of intent (Berkman 2015). The first thing that has to be realized about recruiting high school prospects is that they are graded on a numerical scale from one to five supported by stars. A one-star athlete is not as sought after as five-star athletes. This makes the end game apparent, acquire the most five-star athletes that a program can possibly have. This grading scale takes into consideration all of the attributes that a high school athlete has to offer, pertaining to his skill position. After a player has had a star rating given to them, they are available for the program to start their recruiting process.

The recruitment team's sole job is to find new talent to bring to the head coach for evaluation. This means that three hundred and sixty-five days a year they have their minds tuned in to finding young talent. The information can come from many different ways, but in most cases, the players themselves create game films and send them to colleges throughout the country. Felder (2013) explains in his article that in most cases a student can be his own biggest recruiter by sending their personal game tapes to programs throughout the country (Felder, 2013). There are many other ways in which recruiters find new talent besides game film. The recruiters can start locally and search for the players at in-state high schools by attending high school games that a potential prospect will be playing in. The recruiters can also search the web for information about prospects that live out of state. Teams can also set up what is called a satellite camp. The satellite camp is an unwritten by-law in college football that allows most teams to attend different development camps in the United States as guests to the camp. This allows coaches to attend these camps in different states and allows them an opportunity to create a relationship with players that they would not have otherwise. These satellite camps were created by Penn State head coach James Franklin as a way to get a jump start on recruiting. The *Los Angeles Times* wrote an article on the importance of Satellite Camps. Griffin & Dougherty (2014) explain in their article that satellite camps are attractive to programs because it is extra work that they get to put into building relationships with high caliber athletes. The coaches get one-on-one time with players and can give the players a good example of what it would be like playing for the coach (Griffin & Dougherty, 2014).

Satellite Camps

Satellite camps have been a serious topic lately because it puts the Southeastern Conference, or SEC and the Atlantic Coast Conference, or ACC, at a disadvantage because these two conferences have laws saying that they cannot partake in satellite camps that are outside of a fifty-mile range of the school. This gives a huge advantage to Big Ten schools like Penn State over dominating SEC schools like Alabama and company. *The Detroit Press* published an article about the frustration that the coaches in the SEC feel about satellite camps. Alter (2016) wrote that Alabama head coach Nick Saban felt that satellite camps are bad for college football and that it challenges the integrity of the game. It may seem that Coach Saban is frustrated that he cannot partake in these camps, but none the less, it is a huge advantage for teams that can partake in these camps. It puts the teams a step ahead of schools that cannot partake in the camps and can help pave the way for being a successful football program (Alter, 2016).

All of the schools that have had success being at the top of the recruitment list have dedicated countless hours to the recruitment process and take it very seriously. This is why successful programs have continued to be successful, and how recruitment can help a team reach success.

Targeting Players

The next step after finding a target on the recruitment spectrum is letting the recruit know that the school is interested in them. This can come by way of a phone call from a recruiter or a formal piece of mail sent by the program showing their interest in the prospect. This sets a precedence and is the first step that bonds the players to the

recruitment process. This lets the athlete know that a school is interested in them and can act as a welcoming sign of more contact to come (Felder, 2014).

After contact has been made and a prospect has shown interest in the program, a formal meeting is set up. Depending on how highly sought after the athlete is will depend on who will be present at the meeting. Most higher-level players will involve a meeting with the head coach to give his best pitch supporting his program. Lower level athletes may get an assistant coach or a member of the recruiting team.

The critically acclaimed movie, *The Blind Side*, gives a good example of what this part of the recruitment process can be like. In the movie, by Hancock (2009), there is a scene where a five-star, left tackle named Michael Oher, is being recruited by all of the most successful programs of that time frame. Michael was highly sought after and this meant that he got a personal visit from each head coach. In the scene, coaches from each of the most successful programs during that time gave their best sales pitch on the program. Phillip Fulmer's, the head coach of the University of Tennessee, sales pitch shows how in-depth the coaches will go to get a player that the team wants to commit to that program. Phillip Fulmer's offer was directed towards Michael's little brother. The offer was a chance to flip the coin for the home opening game. Following Phillip Fulmer in the scene was the head coach of The University of Mississippi Ed Odom. The only way that he could beat coach Fulmer's offer was to throw in sideline passes for Michael's little brother (Hancock, 2009).

The above example shows the level of commitment that these coaches and staff have in the recruiting process, and that it really is like a completely different game aside from football. The whole recruiting process can take abundant amounts of energy and is a year-

round job. But it has to be a top priority if you want to be a successful football program.

In covering an interview by Herm Edwards, head coach of Arizona State, Krishner (2018) reported that Coach Edwards said, “I’ll tell you what now: You’re not only recruiting kids. Sometimes you’re trying to recruit the parent, as well. That is what’s amazing. You have to stay in contact with these kids. I’m calling these young athletes all the time and making visits. I’m all over the place. You’re asking an 18-year-old kid to come to your university, and a lot of these kids have no idea why they’re going to your university. They don’t know. They just want to be recruited. They want to know how many people are coming to their house, and how many head coaches are interested in them. It’s an amazing deal.” In this quote, Herm Edwards is trying to make people understand how daunting of a task that the recruiting process is. The recruitment team and coaches are literally trying to get in touch with hundreds of kids at a time to persuade them to choose their college (Krishner, 2018).

Campus Invites

The final step in recruiting a player after, piquing their interest, is inviting them to the campus for a tour of the school, with an emphasis on the team facilities. This has always been a recruiting tactic for any school. The first section of the paper explained how important it is to have nice team and player facilities in order to be a successful football program. This is the point in which the nice facilities mesh with the recruiting process and actually getting the player to commit to your program. During the tour of the team facilities, a player gets to acknowledge what he will be surrounded by for the next four years, and this can have a huge impact on his decision to attend the school he is touring. The schools that do not have these state of the art facilities do not have anything to shock

and awe these recruits coming in to tour the campus. This can negatively affect how these kids see what the next four years of their lives are going to be like. And this is why it is paramount to have great facilities for when the final step of the recruiting process happens and the athlete tours the school. The prospects will see the nice weight rooms, the arcades, the hot tubs, and everything else that the program has to offer. If a program has things like this in place, that pique the interest of the kids, then they have a great chance of swaying the prospect in their direction. All of these factors covered express the importance of recruiting players to the program.

This is why it is key for a program to have excellent recruitment to be a successful football program.

This concludes the second platform of being a successful football program. This platform is the actual players and how the program recruits them. These are to key factors in having success in college football. Without players, you cannot field a team, so that in itself makes the players key to being a successful football program.

The recruiting process and how you get these players is also an important piece of being successful. As explained earlier the recruiting process is like a completely separate game itself, and if executed perfectly the result will be high-level talent attending the program. Dominating the recruiting world is very important if a program wants to be successful. This part of the process is where schools acquire their talent, and after researching the recruiting process it is apparent that it is something that every successful football program in the country takes very seriously. This is the reason why teams like Alabama can continue to be a contender every year because of the excellent recruitment that brings in multiple five-star athletes to their program every season.

Supporting Staff

The next step towards having a successful football program is having a good supporting staff that assists in anything the head coach or the program needs. A supporting staff is a group made of different people and coaches that are very important to the football program. It starts at the top with assistant coaches and coordinators. From there it trickles down to individual position coaches. After position coaches, programs have trainers and strengthening coaches. The last level of this platform are the team managers. The positions stated above can make or break a football team and contribute to success or failure. The next section of this paper will cover the different positions and research the importance of each position to the team and how they can affect the success of the football program.

Assistant Coaches and Coordinators

The first position in the supporting staff that will be covered in this paper is the assistant coaches and the coordinators. The coordinators and assistant coaches are the head coach's right-hand men. Having excellent assistant coaches is very important part of a football program's success. They work closely with the head coach to execute the game plan set in place by the head coach. Sutton (2013) explains in his article key that an assistant coach must perform in order for the team to be successful. They perform duties to lessen the workload of the head coach and relieve any extra burden that the head coach may have. Some of the duties that assistant coaches perform include developing a relationship with the head coach, being a great communicator, promote the culture set by the head coach, and have a great work ethic (Sutton, 2013).

Supporting the Head Coach

The main task of an assistant coach is to help the head coach succeed. The head coach of Harvard University, Tommy Amaker, said, “think like a head coach, but act as an assistant coach.” This quote says a lot about how the assistant coaches are respected. In this quote, coach Amaker is indicating that duties assigned to an assistant coach are closely related to the duties of a head coach and bear the same kinds of responsibilities. The assistant coach is the second in command and is an essential part of being a successful football program.

The assistant coaches must work diligently to perfect the game plan set by the head coach. They are students of the head coach’s philosophy and forward the information gained to the players. After a head coach creates a game plan, he then goes to work with his assistants to perfect the game plan. From this point, the assistant coaches take this perfected game plan and implement the information into the coaches under them and the players. This is very important in becoming a successful football program because the sole responsibility of coaching a team cannot lie in the hands of just one person. This is why assistant coaches are supplemented into the program. They aid in making the team successful.

Solomon (2015), assistant coaches share in the duties of aiding their head coach but also showing the head coach a different perspective of how the game plan can be altered and executed in a more efficient way. Part of being successful as a program is being able to evolve with the game. This is usually done by implementing different views of how the game should be played. Normally this happens between a younger assistant coach collaborating with a head coach (Solomon, 2015). Alabama Head coach, Nick Saban, has

always believed in a smash mouth type of football. Saban wanted to implement parts of the spread offense that he was not familiar with. This resulted in the hire of offensive coordinator Lane Kiffin. Dodd (2014) wrote in his article the importance of bringing Kiffin into Alabama's program. Adding Kiffin helped improve the whole offense and took their program to the next level (Dodd, 2014). This article shows how important it can be to have a great assistant coach, and how it can attribute to being successful. Working closely with Kiffin, Saban edited his whole offensive game plan in order to improve his offense.

Position Coaches

The next member of the supporting staff that will be discussed, in this paper, is the individual coaches. These coaches are specialized in a particular position. Position coaches have the most hands-on interaction with the players and help the players improve their skills. Each position is assigned a coach and these coaches have had years of training with that particular position. Sutton (2013) explains the importance of an individual position coach to a player. The player is recruited with the tools necessary to have success, but the players' position coach finely tunes the athletes' tools in order to make them the best that they can be. It is necessary to have great position coaches in order for the program to be successful (Sutton, 2013). According to (NCAA 2017), the rulebook states that a team can roster up to one hundred and five players during the football season. This high number of athletes is why it is imperative to have position coaches. This is too high of a volume for just the head and assistant coaches to concentrate on. There is a high amount of talent that would never get specialized training if the sole responsibility of coaching fell on just the assistants and head coach. This is why it is necessary to have assistant coaches, to get one-on-one time with the athletes brought in to fully maximize their potential and talents. This

specialized time that a position coach has with their players is a direct correlation of better gameplay from the athletes. This, in return, improves your team as a whole, making them better on both sides of the ball, and can help aid in becoming a successful football program.

Trainers and Strengthening Coaches

The next level of the supporting staff that will be covered in this paper are the trainers and strengthening coaches. Every successful college football team has a great trainer or team of doctors that diagnose and rehabilitate any injury that the team's athletes may encounter while at the university. This is very important due to the fact that football is a contact sport and key players will be faced with injuries. The trainers and medical staff are the people in place that take care of this burden in order to help get the players back to action as quickly as possible. Strengthening coaches also play a big role in the success of a program. Many schools have nutrition and strengthening and conditioning coaches to ensure that the athletes are in the best physical shape that they can possibly be. The next section of this paper will cover these two huge aspects of becoming a successful football program.

Thomas (2017) College football has been deemed the most dangerous of all college athletics. College football has the highest injury rate with thirty-six injuries per one thousand players. College football has the highest amount of impact and collision, resulting in the highest amount knee and ankle injuries of any sport in college athletics. With all these injuries, it is very important to have a team of highly trained staff that can diagnose and treat these injuries (Thomas, 2017). Fok (2007) In treating athletes and their injuries, sports medicine and sports trainers use state of the art technology to further diagnoses, treatment, and rehabilitation. While some medical technologies that are more commonly

used to treat sports injuries have been in place for decades, new improvements in the last decade have increased the ability to make more accurate diagnoses and excel the recovery process, allowing athletes to heal stronger and faster (Fok, 2007). It may seem that having spectacular team doctors and trainers has nothing to do with the actual outcome of the football season. But athletes get hurt on a daily basis, especially in football, and helping to speed the recovery process and heal the athletes faster allows the athletes to be on the field quicker after being injured. If the program can keep the team on the field, or get them back to competition after injuries then the outcome will result in being more successful.

Along with team doctors and trainers, the program also employs nutrition coaches and strengthening coaches. These are the people in a football program that ensure that the athletes are in tip top shape above other programs. This is a subject that is key to becoming a successful football program. If a program wants to be more successful than other programs they have to be better at every aspect of the game and health and nutrition are two very important factors. Football is a long and enduring game and it takes great amounts of strength, as well as endurance. Football programs all over the country are starting to realize what an important factor strength and conditioning coaches can be to the program.

Berg (2013) Strength and conditioning coaches used to be an afterthought in college football programs. Now they are key pieces and as valued as assistant coaches. The changes in the game have made programs focus on player development in order to help achieve the goals of being successful (Berg, 2013). This shows the importance of strength and conditioning in today's area of football. Successful programs are emphasizing the strength and conditioning of each one of their players. It has progressed to the point that strength coaches are being looked at in the same light as assistant coaches. Berg (2013)

Alabama has become one of the most successful programs in the country for many reasons, but Scott Cochran is one of the most overlooked reasons for their recent success. Scott Cochran is the University of Alabama strength and conditioning coach. He has helped put together some of the most physically fit athletes in the country and produced Grade A talent to help pave the way for the Crimson Tide's success (Berg, 2013). Parr (2016) reported that Scott Cochran is one of the highest paid strength coaches in college football. Cochran's annual salary has reached five hundred thousand dollars, which makes him the second highest paid strength coach in college football (Parr, 2016). This is the type of commitment that a program has to make to its strength coaches if they want to be successful and compete with the top teams in the nation. Some programs do not put in as much effort in assuring that their strength and conditioning is up to par. These programs are at a disadvantage to schools like Alabama who pride themselves on their strength and condition. It is small factors like this that helps make a football program successful.

Not only do successful programs have to have superior strengthening but the programs also have to ensure that their athletes are receiving the proper diets needed to perform on the gridiron. Dunn (2011) After decades of focusing solely on superior equipment, facilities, and medicine, college football programs are now turning their attention to athlete nutrition. The countries most successful programs are spending large amounts of money to keep their players appropriately fed in order to gain further success. Teams of dieticians are employed by these programs to guide athletes through specialized diets created to prime the athlete for the grueling activities that go along with the sport of football. Successful football programs are going a step further with their nutrition by tracking what players eat via social media. These programs know that the players' nutrition

is key in keeping them in the best shape to perform in a successful manner (Dunn, 2011). There are many teams that do not ensure that their players are getting the nutrition they need to perform at a high level. This is something that can separate an unsuccessful program with a successful program. Nutrition is very important and is another factor that help makes a football program successful.

Team Managers

The next level of the supporting staff, that will be covered in this paper, is the team managers. Managers have a huge impact on the team and help keep the day to day processes going. Having a good team manager can help the coaching staff out tremendously. A team manager is the person that does all the grunt work in order to lessen the load of the coaches on the team. Being a team manager takes hard work and dedication in order to fulfill the job required by the team. Most managers are often the first to arrive to the practice facilities and the last to leave. Many important duties are required of the managers in order to keep the flow of the team moving slowly. Most teams have an equipment manager. The equipment manager ensures that all of the equipment meets the NCAA standards.

This concludes the third building block of becoming a successful football program. Programs that strive for success have to have a good supporting staff in order to function in an elite manner. It takes assistant coaches, position coaches, strength and conditioning coaches, and team managers to help run a successful football program. Having all of these components also takes some of the burden off of the head coach and allows the head coach to focus on more pressing matters that can arrive from the sport. All of these pieces

functioning at once set in motion the key factors of a supporting staff that a program must have in order to reach success.

A Successful Head Coach

To this point in the paper, many different roles of a coaching staff have been researched and the importance each role plays to help become a successful football program has been explained. The last and final member of the coaching staff is the head coach. This is one of the most important jobs in college football. Sallee (2015) The first step in building a successful football program is having a good coach who can act as the front man (Sallee, 2015). There are so many factors that go into being a successful college football coach. There are also many different ways that a college football coach can approach the road to success. The successfulness of a college football program directly correlates to how the program is run by the coach. A head coach must first have a specialized philosophy that will be the basis of how his or her team is run. This boils down to the X's and O's of offense and defense. Secondly, there are certain characteristics that a successful head coach should have. A successful head coach has to bring his own culture to a program and get his players to buy into that culture. The last section of this paper will examine all of the areas that a head coach should excel in, in order to help make their program successful.

Creating a Philosophy

The first thing that a head coach should construct, on the road to successfulness, is a game plan or philosophy. A coaching philosophy is very important to a head coach because this is the basis of what the coach will be teaching his athletes. Guthrie (2003) The coaching philosophy you choose is central to how a coach defines his or her career, and

how your team functions in practices and game scenarios. The coaching philosophy is the foundation of your program, and it navigates the program while setting a platform for the athletes on the team (Guthrie, 2003). This shows that the first step in becoming a coach is creating a philosophy that will create the platform of how the program will execute the coach's game plan.

To create a philosophy, a coach has to start with either offense or defense. The offensive philosophy will determine how the coach runs their offense. This can include the pace of which the offense runs the plays created by the head coach, the types of formations that the program will run, and the types of plays that the program will run through the formations. This is the starting point at which a coach begins their playbook and schemes and how the team will execute the playbook of the coach.

Types of Offenses

The two types of paces that an offense can run are huddle and no-huddle offenses. The first type of offense covered is no-huddle. This type of offense will depict how fast the offense uses the time in between plays. A no-huddle offense will take no breaks in between plays. A no-huddle offense is used to speed up the tempo and wear down the opposing defense. The second type of offense that a coach can elect to run is the huddled offense. In this form of offense, the offense huddles together in between plays. This type of tempo is the more contemporary of the two and is used primarily to give your team a break, while also containing the composure of your offense. Both paces of play have been used in the game of football and both have been highly successful. Both styles of offense have been used by highly successful football programs. This means that neither style of offense is

right or wrong. A coach just simply has to pick which pace fits the philosophy that he or she wants to implement.

After choosing the style of offense that fits the coach's philosophy, it is now time to choose which formations that the offense will run their plays out of. There are multiple formations that an offense can run. These formations are broken down into two different setups. These two setups involve the quarterback either being under center, which is mainly a run-first style of offense. The second set up is a shotgun formation, which is based more around the quarterback passing the ball and is referred to as the spread offense. Formations with a quarterback under center can include; single back formation, I formation, and wishbone formation. Shotgun formations include a variance of where the running back is aligned, and how many receivers you have on either side of the ball. (Appendix C shows the ways that these different formations are executed).

Each of these styles and offensive formations has been proven to work. Nick Saban is the head coach at The University of Alabama. Coach Saban is one of the winningest coaches in college football history and has helped to make Alabama one of the most successful football programs in America. One reason that coach Saban has had so much success in college football is his hard-nosed under center style of offense. Clavert (2010) The 2009 Alabama Crimson Tide was based on strength and physicality, instead of speed like most spread offenses. Saban and The Tide demonstrated that toughness and physical play can combine with a great running game can be a formula for success. (Clavert, 2010) Alabama, under Nick Saban, has always proven that lining up under center can win you games, but you can be highly successful running the shotgun offense as well. Callos (2012) wrote an article about the Clemson Tiger head coach, Dabo Swinney, and how he runs a

shotgun-based offense. The article explains that The Tigers primarily run a shotgun spread offense. The Clemson offenses have been one of the most successful offenses in the country as of late. Clemson loves to pass the ball in order to spread the defense to open lanes for their running backs (Callos, 2012)

Coach Dabo Swinney and Coach Nick Saban have both helped their programs become very successful and they execute a differing type of offense from each other. This proves that either style of offense will work and it is not a matter of which style of offense a program should run. It is a matter of which style of offense fits the talent of the players on the team. Mitsos (2012) The first step of choosing which offense to run depends on the strengths of the program's players. If the team includes a quarterback with a strong arm and good receivers, a shotgun based offense will best suit the talent. If the team has above average offensive linemen and a good running back, then an under-center style of offense will best suit the talent on the team. (Mitsos, 2012)

Types of Defenses

The next part of a head coaches game plan is the strategy that will be executed on the defensive side of the ball. Defense is also a part of the game that is based on formations. Dian (2016) The most common defensive formations are the; four-three, three-four, four-four, and the five-three. The numbers correlate with defensive linemen and linebackers. The first number in the formation refers to the number of defensive linemen that are on the line of scrimmage. The second number marks how many linebackers are lined up behind the defensive line. Defense is a situational form of the game What this means is a head coach has to decide what type of defense he wants based on the situation that the offense is in (Dian, 2016). (These formations can be seen in Appendix D)

The head coach has to make a decision on which type of defense that the team will focus on. This is usually called the base defensive set and will be the default formation that the team will focus on. As Mitsos (2012) explained, a head coach's job is to base their offensive game plan on the strengths of their players. The same goes for the opposite side of the ball. If the team has strong, powerful defensive lineman, then that coach should elect to go with a four or five-man front. If the linebackers are athletic and highly skilled, then a formation with four linebackers would be the formation a coach should decide to run (Mitsos, 2012).

The offensive and defensive philosophy that a head coach decides to implement is a very important part of being a successful football program. It is the basis of how the coach will teach the team to perform on the field. It is a necessity to have a game plan in order to compete in the sport of football. It has been proven that a coach that can master his own philosophy and translate it to the team will lead to the success of the program. It also shows the importance of the head coach to the program gaining such success. The head coach is who decides what offensive and defensive formations that a team will run and how the team executes the X's and O's.

Characteristics of a Successful Head Coach

In order to be a successful program, the program has to have a head coach that is capable of taking the team to success. A head coach is not given the ability to be successful at birth. It is something that takes hard work and dedication. It also takes special characteristics that a coach must possess in order to reach highest points of success. These characteristics will help aid in a coach becoming successful. There are eight basic qualities that make a successful head coach. The characteristics are; drive, creating togetherness,

fairness, consistency, being a builder, making decisions and sticking with them, being humble, and having class (Kohm, 2011). The next section of the paper will cover the characteristics and explain how important these characteristics are in order to be a successful football coach, which is a key part of being a successful football program.

Drive

The first characteristic of becoming a successful head coach is drive. A head coach must have a drive that will allow the coach to endure any challenges that may be presented. Coaches must drive themselves to outwork anybody that is involved in the program, including the players. Successful head coaches set the tone for the work ethic that the program will present and challenges anyone to keep pace. Babb (2015) wrote an article on the drive of Clemson head coach, Dabo Swinney. In 2000 Dabo lost his coaching job at The University of Alabama and was forced to spend time away from football and sold real estate. Dabo did not give up on his dream of creating a successful football program. Dabo was offered a job at Clemson University in 2002. He grinded for the team as an assistant coach for eight years. In 2008 Swinney was offered the head coaching job of Clemson. His drive never ceased, and in return won a national championship in 2017 (Babb, 2015). Dabo was forced to be away from the game but still had the drive to be successful in the sport. This is why drive can be an important part of being a successful football coach.

Create Togetherness

Another huge characteristic a head football coach must have is the ability to bring people from different parts of the country together in order to form a bond that cannot be broken. This can play a huge role in a successful football program because football is not an individual sport. Football is a team sport and takes a collective effort from everyone on

the team in order to be successful. A head coach has to bring his team together in order to display a team effort in every aspect of the game. In order to have togetherness coaches have to look at the whole team as one. This means that if one person wins, the whole team wins, and if one person loses, the whole team loses.

Fairness

A successful head coach also has to exhibit fairness in order to sustain balance in the program. A head coach has to set rules for a team that must be upheld to the fullest. A fair head coach must treat each player on the team the exact same, no matter the importance of one player to another. Some head coaches will let certain breaches of rules slide if the player has a huge impact on the team. This is not the way a successful head coach should conduct his team. In order to be fair and act in a fair way, every player must be treated equally. According to Kohm (2011), an interview with hall of fame quarterback, Joe Namath, revealed a time when he played for Bear Bryant at the University of Alabama. In Namath's junior year at Alabama, he was suspended for the last game of the season against Miami. Namath had been out past curfew on a night before the last game. Namath had also been drinking, both were a breach of team rules. Coach Bryant suspended the team's star quarterback for the remainder of the season (Kohm, 2011). This could have potentially lost the Sugar Bowl for the Crimson Tide, but instead of giving Namath special treatment, Bryant punished him just as he would any player on the team. This showed the fairness that Bryant displayed during his time as a head coach. Bryant's fairness was a characteristic that helped him become one of the winningest coaches in college football history. It also helped Bryant build The University of Alabama into one of the most successful football programs in the history of the game.

Consistency

If a coach wants to be successful they also have to show consistency. There will be coaches in college football who can make a run at the championship any given year, but there is a very small amount of head coaches in today's game that can consistently lead their team to a winning season every year. Urban Meyer has been a staple for success in college football since he started coaching. Meyer is the head coach of Ohio State University. Since Meyer took over the Buckeye program in 2012, the Buckeyes have won more than ninety percent of their games. Ohio State has also never lost more than two games in a season during Meyer's tenure in the program (Hope 2017). This shows the level of consistency that Urban Meyer has shown year in and year out. His consistency has helped Ohio State become one of the most successful football programs in the nation.

Ability to Build

In order to be a successful head coach, the coach also has to be a builder. Some head coaches inherit successful programs. In most cases, coaches have to build a successful program or rebuild the program. Burton (2010) Bobby Bowden inherited the head coaching job of Florida State University when they were a below average team every year. The Seminoles had only won four games in the previous three years before Bowden took over the team. After taking over the program Bowden only had one losing season and made the Seminoles a program that finished top five in the AP poll 14 straight seasons. Bowden also won two National Championships while at Florida State in 1993 and 1999. This shows how a successful head coach has to be able to build a program in order to reach success (Burton 2010).

Making Tough Decisions

A head coach must also be able to make a decision and stick with that decision. This can be very difficult for a coach to do because head coaches are under a microscope with every move they make. Coaches also need to be able to take risky chances and be able to support their own decisions. Scarborough (2018) In the 2018 National Championship, Alabama was losing in the fourth quarter to The University of Georgia. Nick Saban decided to make a switch at quarterback. Saban benched his second year starting quarterback and inserted his true freshman backup. The backup quarterback led The Tide to a scoring drive to put the game into overtime. In the overtime, Alabama needed a touchdown to win the game. The backup quarterback then scored a touchdown in overtime to win the game (Scarborough, 2018). This was a huge chance for Saban to take. Benching his starting QB in favor of a true freshman, that has never played a live snap, could have ended horribly. Instead, Saban stuck with his decision and the decision ended up winning a National Championship. Every head coach is going to be faced with a tough decision to make. Making these decisions and sticking with them can help a coach become successful. The decisions can also win National Championships like stated above and help for the program to become successful.

Being Humble

In order for a head coach to help bring success to a program, the coach has to be humble. A great coach is one that gives all the credit for wins and takes all the blame and responsibility for a loss. The head coach has to protect his team in any way possible. This can mean taking the blame for a loss even if the loss was due to a player fumbling or a player dropping a pass. If a team wins, then a successful coach will give all the credit to

anyone inside the program besides himself. This can be one of the most important characteristics for a successful coach to have. Placing the blame on the team for a loss shows extreme lack of leadership. It can also ruin the team chemistry if the team thinks that the coach will not take any blame for a loss. This can negatively affect a program and the program achieving success.

Having Class

The single most important characteristic of a successful head coach is having class. Class is a characteristic that a successful head coach must teach their athletes, but it is impossible to teach players class without the coach having it himself. There is a level of class that every successful head coach has to have in order to run a successful football program. One of the most successful college football coaches ever, Bear Bryant, said this, “I have tried to teach them to show class, to have pride, and to display character. I think football, winning games, takes care of itself if you do that” (Burton 2010). In this quote by Bear Bryant, the coach explains the importance of having class, teaching it to the team and creating a program that shows the utmost class in every aspect of life. Respect goes hand in hand with class, and part of being successful is being respected and showing respect. This is achievable if the program has class, and in return can put the program on the right track to being successful.

Conclusion

Clearly, becoming a successful football program is not an easy task. It can take years of hard work and dedication. Being a successful football program also takes a series of variables but is not limited to; having a good supporting program, players and recruitment, a good supporting staff, and a successful head coach. If a program can put all

of these variables together then the program has created a mixture of a winning solution.

This winning solution has to be backed up by every aspect covered in this paper, and if every aspect is covered then the road to becoming a successful football program should be an achievable goal.

Appendix A

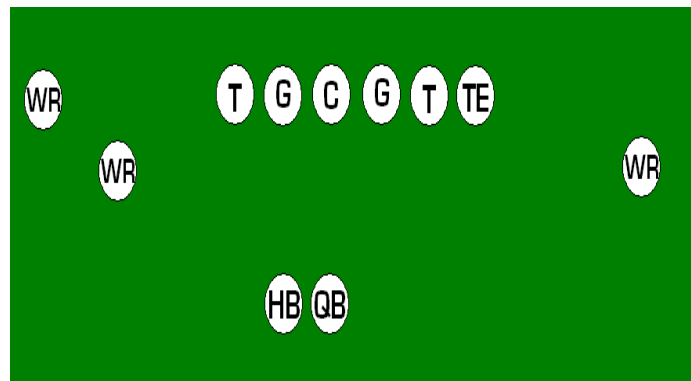
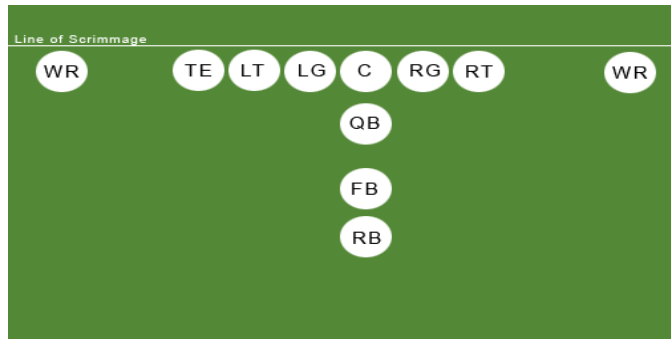
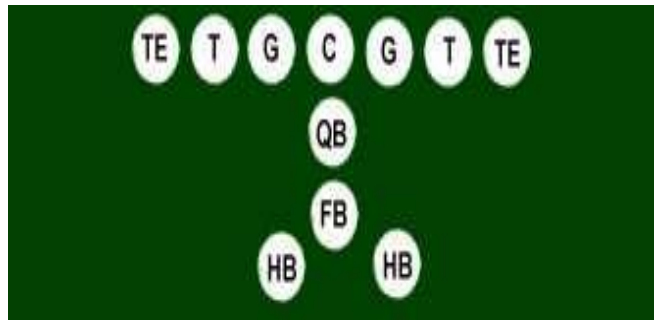
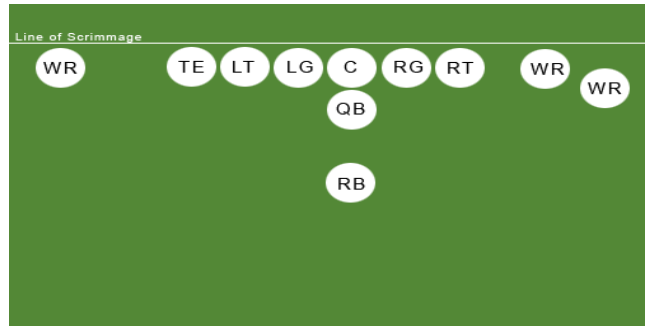
ALL GAMES ATTENDANCE*(Home, Road, Neutral)*

No.	School	Games	Attendance
1.	Ohio St.	14	1,254,160
2.	Georgia	15	1,246,201
3.	Alabama	14	1,228,376
4.	Auburn	14	1,162,955
5.	Penn St.	13	1,146,641

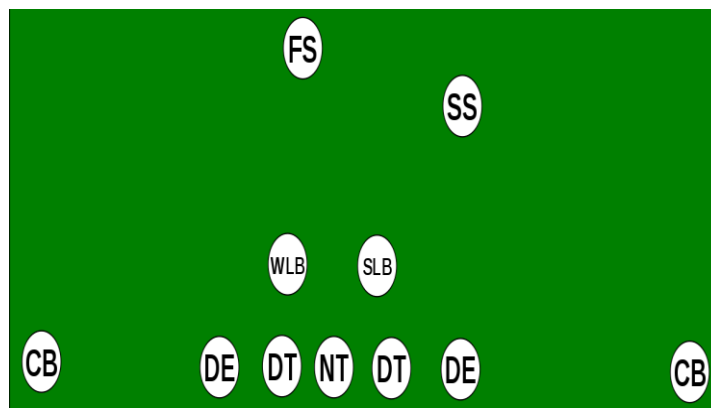
Appendix B



Appendix C



Appendix D



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