

THE LONG RED LINE

A NEWSLETTER DEVOTED TO ALL CARDINAL FOOTBALL PLAYERS; PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

~ What we do on some great occasion will probably depend on what we already are; and what we are will be the result of previous years of self-discipline. ~

Henry Parry Liddon

PRACTICE FOR SUCCESS

Practice shouldn't be thought of as something reserved exclusively for the football field. To be honest, it is an undertaking that is far too important to be used solely for a game that is only played from August to November.

Practice is a foundation, a life skill wrapped in habit, that will serve to prepare you for anything you want to accomplish through out your days.

Granted, you may run across prodigies; those that can solve differential calculus equations, play an entire Beethoven symphony or speak foreign languages fluently at the age of five. You can probably count all of them with your shoes still on.

However, as the word it self suggests, being gifted in this fashion is the rarest of exceptions - scarcely ever the rule. The vast majority of us have to get to accomplishment, mastery and excellence the old fashioned way; with practice.

If you stop and think about it, you are surrounded by limitless opportunities for practice. School, for example, is layer, upon layer, upon layer of chances for practice.

At school, the most notable layer is on top, a mixture of all the academic subjects themselves: math, science, ELA and foreign languages just to name a few. Each school day, you are exposed to an ever expanding universe of ideas, facts and practical applications of knowledge.

In one respect, at this level you are learning to value "learning". With some practice, this is perhaps one of the most important skills you can develop over your lifetime. If you aren't learning - you aren't growin'. So if you ever find your self muttering the phrase "I will never use algebra" you are missing the point entirely.

Exposure to all of these subjects is an opportunity to see the big academic picture - IMAX style - laid out in such a fashion as to help lead you towards discovering your life's work - your passion.

If you are astute enough to recognize this for what it really is - you can become a mathematician for now and always double back to become a writer later if you choose. If you value the pursuit of learning, you will always be able to forge your own path.

Just below that surface are the lessons to be found in time management and prioritizing your activities. The school day has structure for a reason. You are developing a routine: practicing how to keep to a schedule and learning skills to make the absolute most of your time.

Doing the little things, like practicing some discipline now, will help you reap big rewards later. Don't get it in your head that this is too hard, too big, or too boring an obstacle to overcome.

As you begin to consistently attend to those little things when needed, you become better at it. It will eventually become second nature: you will develop efficiency. When that happens, you can actually create time. Time for some of the other things you want to do. I will bet you never thought of practice as doing that for you. Believe it or not, developing a personal routine can be a truly liberating experience.

Lastly, school provides you with an opportunity to practice some very important interpersonal skills; like choosing good friends, developing your talents for leadership and making sound decisions.

Each trip on the bus, walk through the hall, or moment spent at your desk in the classroom can serve as an incubator for practicing all sorts of valuable social interactions.

You can find out for your self what it takes and what it means to be a true friend.

You will be challenged to exercise your leadership muscles, to do all the "right things" even if you might be the only one doing them.

Most importantly, you will learn that the most compelling voice to follow is that little one that tells you something is not right - even though an entire chorus is singing the praises of following the herd.

You see, practice is truly a life skill. Don't just save it for next fall.

Get started now. Put in some practice time now for your future success.

"Practice means to perform, over and over again in the face of all obstacles, some act of vision, of faith, of desire. Practice is a means of inviting the perfection desired."

Martha Graham