

THE LONG RED LINE

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

~ Cherish your visions and your dreams as they are the children of your soul; the blue prints of your ultimate accomplishments ~

Napolean Hill

DREAM "BIG"

The power of dreaming "big" is an instrument that should never be underestimated. It is an essential building block for personal achievement and a crucial element in creating opportunities for success in the pursuit of excellence.

"Dreaming" isn't and should never be confused with "wishing"; passively waiting and yearning for good fortune to somehow find its way to you. Things just don't happen to you, you must happen to things.

To dream "big", one must engage in decisive, purposeful action. It is a perpetual, intentional activity to pursue a "cherished aspiration"; first in thought and then in deed.

The personal investment and the time needed to arrive at your dream's destination will be proportional to how "big" you make it. Your masterpiece will need to be nourished by patience and faith.

By creating a vivid mental image while maintaining your focus on that vision, dreaming "big" can literally place you at your ultimate destination. Your ability to "see" yourself, right where you intend to be, can create a sense of the kind of person you will need to be to get there.

With consistent repetition (practice) and commitment, you can mentally return to where it is you want to go, over and over. Employing this exercise regimen will reveal to you a much clearer understanding of just what it will take to get from "here" to "there".

Over time, you will begin to "see" where your effort, attitude and commitment can ultimately transport you. Dreaming "big" can give tangible form to what you were always intended to be. It can transform "who" you will become in the process.

Painting this masterpiece in your mind is and will always be the first essential step towards being as "big" as you dreamed.

This Sunday, you will be able to witness the culmination of a long journey by some special individuals that have done just that.

Without a doubt, players and coaches for the "Beloved" and the Steelers have dreamed "big". They have worked very hard for this opportunity to play "big" for a very long time.

Whether this Superbowl is their first or just one of many, this Sunday can truly be a defining moment for both players and coaches. Making it to this pinnacle is an extraordinary accomplishment. For many, it may be their one and only time.

This single accomplishment might well be considered the moment that defines a player's career. Perhaps this is a notion that is most relevant regarding the accrual of individual accomplishments, honors and awards.

However, in a more meaningful sense, the effort that they have expended, the commitments they have honored and the choices they have made over the course of their lives to "get there" did far more to define them, than these four quarters of football ever will.

True, they have an opportunity to play "big" in the Superbowl. However, they became "big" as persons on their way to that moment.

As such, what they have become during their quest to get to that one game will undeniably define that moment. They will cast an indelible impression not just on the game, but on all those that participate; whether playing, coaching or watching.

From a personal standpoint, it simply boggles the mind to think of the physical, mental and emotional investment one had to make just to get to this point.

Over such an extended span of time, elements of adversity such as self-doubt, anxiety, pain and fatigue must have appeared and reappeared as

uninvited companions. To be sure, the specter of failure rode shotgun on various legs of this trip, doling out harsh lessons in humility along the way. Even those with tremendous gifts couldn't make it, fell by the wayside, and became a testament to the difficulty of the task.

If you were Donald Driver, a 7th round pick, this would be your 12th season in the NFL. You would think that this would be dream enough for the 213th player taken in the 1999 college draft.

Apparently not.

In making his first Superbowl appearance this weekend, #80 might well have spent over half of his entire lifetime practicing just to get to this point.

If you consider his time spent at Alcorn State, perhaps as a four year player with one year as a red shirt, Donald Driver has already accumulated 17 years of "practice" during his journey to get to where his dream placed him.

Going back one more level, if he was a four year high school student-athlete, add those into the total. Taking one more giant step backwards and you might be into his youth football career. Just for argument sake, add in another four years to keep all the numbers somewhat even.

On top of that, imagine all the hours spent dreaming "big" playing flag football, recess football or sandlot games around the neighborhood. Chances are, he was a kid just like all of you.

So, do the math: twelve + four + one + four + four = twenty-five years.

Twenty-five years spent actively dreaming "big"; placing himself in that game.

Twenty-five years of committed, grueling effort; a complete physical, mental and emotional investment to get "there".

Twenty-five years of making the right choices; choices that created the opportunities to finally shine in this year's game in Arlington.

To be certain, the twenty-five years spent on this path has had a much deeper significance beyond the four quarters of football that have yet to be played. Just look past the pads at Donald Driver and you will see he just how "big" he became.

Traveling that distance, for that amount of time cannot help but bring definition to one as a person. A feat of this magnitude cannot help but reveal some of the more remarkable attributes of one's character.

As such, the twenty-five years spent in this manner of singleminded effort, to bring life to a dream that big, will inevitably outshine any accolade, honor or award bestowed. No offense to Coach Lombardi, but his trophy will pale in comparison to the human endeavor.

Sometime next week, once all has been said and done, and normalcy returns, it will all begin to sink in and register. The person they became throughout their journey was in reality their moment. They will realize that they truly became as "big" as their dream.

So, what about you?

Have you begun to paint your picture?

How big is your dream?

Will it be big enough to inspire all that you aspire to be?

How "big" do you think you can become?

"We grow great by dreams. All big men are dreamers. They see things in the soft haze of a spring day or in the red fire of a long winter's evening. Some of us let these great dreams die, but others nourish and protect them; nurse them through bad days till they bring them to the sunshine and light which comes always to those who sincerely hope that their dreams will come true."

Woodrow Wilson