

Coach Zak Boisvert has put together some notes on the coaching philosophy of Alabama Football Coach Nick Saban. I hope the notes can have a positive impact on your program. All coaches can learn something, regardless of what sport we coach.

PROCESS

"We're not going to talk about what we're going to accomplish, we're going to talk about how we're going to do it."

"We don't talk about winning championships, we talk about being champions."

-"I'm tired of hearing all this talk from people who don't understand the process of hard work—like little kids in the back seat asking 'Are we there yet?' Get where you're going 1 mile-marker at a time."

-"The scoreboard has nothing to do with the process. Each possession you look across at the opponent and commit yourself to dominate that person. It's about individuals dominating the individuals they're playing against. If you can do this...if you can focus on the one possession and wipe out the distractions...then you will be satisfied with the result."

-"He says 'the grind' a lot. The things you have to do so you can do what you want to do. Like play for the national championship. All the workouts. Spring ball. All the practices, summer workouts, and things like that." -Alabama LB E. Anders

-"Focus on the play like it has a history and a life of its own."

-"Success doesn't come from pie-in-the-sky thinking. It's the result of consciously doing something each day that will add to your overall excellence."

-There's no mention of titles. Instead, his message has been that the way to win a championship is to concentrate on what you're doing today, and try to build on that tomorrow.

-“It’s not the end result. Don’t think about winning the SEC Championship. Don’t think about the national championship. Think about what you needed to do in this drill, on this play, in this moment.

That’s the process: Let’s think about what we can do today, the task at hand.”

-“If you don’t get result-oriented with the kids, you can focus on the things in the process that are important to them being successful.”

DARE TO BE GREAT:

-“Being the absolute best isn’t natural. You must bend your entire life around being great. Beat the urge to rest after you’ve achieved a taste of success.”

-“Once you get good, you need a total disposition about being better than good. Now the challenge is to be the best and that’s a never-ending process.”

CULTURE:

“We don’t have one individual on our team that can make our team great, but we can have one individual who could destroy the team chemistry by making bad decisions and destroy all the things we’re talking about.”

-“Team chemistry begins to surface in the summer. True leaders start to emerge. You start to see the core buy-in that everybody has in terms of how they go about what they do. For the first time, the responsibility becomes theirs instead of somebody else’s. You start to see what the team might be.”

-“He does an outstanding job of getting everybody on the same page and making sure that they understand ‘Look, you’re going to buy in or you’re going to become irrelevant.’”

-“You’ve got to be responsible and accountable and be able to do your job. There’s a way you have to do it in terms of the effort, the toughness and the intangibles and

dependability you have and discipline you have in carrying out your responsibility. And I, quite frankly, think when you have a critical mass of players on your team that think like that, they don't really want other guys that don't think that way to be out there with them."

Five Day-to-Day Goals

- 1) Respect and trust your teammates
- 2) Have a positive impact on someone else
- 3) Dominate your opponent
- 4) Be responsible
- 5) Act like a champion

PARABLES:

"If I put a 2-by-4 on the ground and asked you to walk across it, how many of you guys could do that? You could all do it, because you'd focus on the board. But what if I took the same 2-by-4 and it put it 10 stories up, stretched between 2 buildings? Then it's hard to focus on the board, because you're focused on your fear of falling. Focus on your goals. Don't be distracted by your fears. Concentrate on the 2-by-4 and we'll get it done."

"Discipline is not punishment. Discipline is changing someone's behavior."

Four Components of Leadership

Engage: You HAVE to make it about them because they don't see it like we do. Get over it, youth have changed.

Inspire: Why does every coach think that everyone wants to be great? Human condition is to survive, to be average. IT IS SPECIAL TO WANT TO BE GREAT. You cannot expect your kids to want to be great. We've had success here at Alabama

because we don't assume people want to be great and we've put a system in place that makes it uncomfortable unless they're choosing the path that will make them great. We don't assume they will do it on their own. It's up to us to inspire/put a system in place to make people want it.

Influence: Thoughts, Habits, Priorities. Influence these 3 (IN THAT ORDER!)

Impact: How do we impact them? How do they impact each other? Peer intervention + peer pressure.

"Nick has unique ability to make everyone in the building single-minded in purpose. There's nobody in there that isn't doing something to try to win." -Bill Belichick

"Everything for us goes back to trust and respect. Trust and respect the principles of organization, trust and respect each other."

"He puts a structure in place that covers all areas from ankle-wrappers to play-callers. Everyone is held accountable. It's a system where people know there's a standard, an expectation that you're there to meet." -Major Applewhite

"You have to challenge people to do things a certain way and it may be more than what they expect from themselves. You have to re-enforce positive performance when they do it, but you also have to confront them to do it correctly if they don't do it that way. And there's a balance in there."

SELF-DISCIPLINE:

"Everything you do, everything you have, everything you become is ultimately the result of the choices you have made. You have the power to direct your life. How will you use it? What's your choice?"

You have to have discipline to do things on your own. There's not always going to be someone to make you do it. You have to have discipline to do it yourself."

MOTIVATION

"I don't care what you did yesterday. If you're happy with that, you have bigger problems."

MENTAL TOUGHNESS

"Mental toughness is a perseverance that you have when you can make yourself do something that you really don't feel like doing. You don't really feel like getting up, but you get up. You don't feel like practicing today, but you practice. And, even in difficult circumstances and difficult surroundings, you can stay focused on what you need to stay focused on. So it really is a mental discipline to be able to stick within whatever circumstance you are in and continue to persevere at a high level and not let other circumstance affect how you perform."

"I will not allow my players to put their hand on their knees or show in their faces they are tired going into the fourth quarter. If they do, they are going to get their butts whipped. If they do that, they are showing the other team they can be beat."

"The mental toughness training was geared toward showing players that their minds were as important to football success as their bodies."

"Every day you come to practice, you get better or you get worse. You're not going to stay the same and it's all going to start with how you think. How you think will determine the mental intensity you play with. Without that mental intensity, we cannot improve."

"There are 3 intangibles that take no athletic ability that aids a player in being responsible for his own self-determination. Those 3 intangibles take the most time in coaching in my opinion. Those intangibles are effort, toughness, and assignment."

"I think the things that it takes to be successful are the same regardless, whether it's passion, commitment, hard work, investing your time in the right things, perseverance, pride in performance, how you think in a positive and negative way, the discipline you have personally—you have to make choices in your decisions."

MISCELLANEOUS:

"He doesn't obsess over national championships, he obsesses over trying to push people to be better. He thinks if he can do that, the wins will come."

"You don't dominate someone the first play, you do it the 70th play. You need to sustain."

"Make all your decisions based on winning." (#1 thing Saban learned from Chuck Knoll)

Locker room sign: "Don't Come Back Until You've Improved"

"Be relentless in the pursuit of your goal and resilient in the face of bad luck and adversity."

"The one thing our program is based upon is finishing. Finish games. Finish your reps. Finish your running. Finish practice strong. Finish the fourth quarter." –Alabama OL Will Vlachos

"Don't look at the scoreboard. Whether you're ahead or behind shouldn't affect how you participate."

"Teaching is the ability to inspire learning."