

THE WINNERS MANUAL

THE WINNERS MANUAL

FOR THE GAME OF LIFE



JIM TRESSEL

WITH CHRIS FABRY



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The Winners Manual: For the Game of Life

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This book is dedicated to all the difference makers in my life. Of course, my mom and dad, Eloise and Lee Tressel, whom I miss every day. My wonderful wife and friend, Ellen Jeanne, who has unselfishly partnered with me to serve others. And my biggest fans and supporters, Zak, Carlee, Eric, and Whitney. You are the best, and I am so proud of you. I was blessed to have two awesome older brothers, Dick and Dave. Thank you all. I love you!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword by John Maxwell ix

Acknowledgments xi

Prologue xiii

PART 1: THE GAME PLAN

CHAPTER 1: The Journey of Success | 3

CHAPTER 2: The Block O of Life | 17

PART 2: THE BIG TEN FUNDAMENTALS

CHAPTER 3: Attitude | 39

CHAPTER 4: Discipline | 69

CHAPTER 5: Excellence | 89

CHAPTER 6: Faith and Belief | 105

CHAPTER 7: Work | 125

CHAPTER 8: Handling Adversity and Success | 151

CHAPTER 9: Love | 171

CHAPTER 10: Responsibility | 191

CHAPTER 11: Team | 211

CHAPTER 12: Hope | 227

PART 3: GAME CHANGERS

CHAPTER 13: Heroes and Winners | 245

Epilogue 259

Credits 269

About the Authors 271

FOREWORD BY JOHN MAXWELL

When Coach Jim Tressel asked me to write the foreword for *The Winners Manual: For the Game of Life*, I was honored. Having grown up in Ohio, I am keenly aware of the impact of Ohio State football and the positive influence that the Buckeyes' coach can have throughout the state and the nation. Recommending this book allows me to introduce Jim Tressel and his coaching and teaching philosophy to some people who might not yet have had the opportunity to get to know him.

Over the years, I have had the good fortune to interact with Coach Tressel and the Buckeyes on numerous occasions. I am proud to say that they have used some of my materials in their pursuit of excellence, and I have had the opportunity to speak to his teams during the 2004, 2006, and 2007 seasons. I have also had the privilege of reading the team version of the Winners Manual that Coach Tressel has developed over the past twenty-two years with his teams—the foundation for the book you're now reading. One of my own books, *Talent Is Never Enough*, was inspired by a page in the team's manual that describes qualities that do not take talent but are essential to the ultimate success of a group.

In the time I've spent with the Buckeyes, it has become obvious to me that the coaching staff has a plan for the development of the whole person, the complete student-athlete. I have been with them in the meeting room, the locker room, and on the sideline. The Buckeyes are focused, competitive, caring, loving, tough, and classy. They have a passion to be winners! The young men who play football for Ohio State have a healthy perspective about themselves, which allows them to express their abilities in a highly competitive world, both on and off the field. They truly seek to reach their full potential.

Each chapter in *The Winners Manual* will illustrate a different fundamental that Coach Tressel has identified as essential for winners. You will study the fundamentals through a combination of quotes and anecdotes, culminating in a "personal game plan" that will help you apply the

fundamentals to all phases of your life. No matter what “position” you play in life, these fundamentals will serve as great training for your contribution to whatever “team” you’re on.

My professional goal is to add value to people’s lives every day. Coach Tressel shares the same passion. If you work through the principles in this book and implement them, you will benefit from *The Winners Manual* and have value added to your life that you will certainly want to pass on to others.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you, first and foremost, to all of the men, women, and families of our United States military, past and present. Their unselfish service and sacrifice have allowed us the freedom to safely chase our dreams in this wonderful country and to seek to be winners in the game of life.

Thank you to all the coaches, players, and dear friends who have shared their lives with me for so many years. I have been so blessed to work with you and grow from your loving examples.

Thank you to Joe Malmisur, Andy Geiger, and Gene Smith, extraordinary athletic directors who have given me a chance to serve. To Mark Summers, who has been there for me, on and off the field, since we played together at B-W. And to Doc Spurgeon, who has taught so many people that love makes the difference if you truly want to serve.

Finally, thank you to all of the good people at Tyndale, especially Carol Traver and Chris Fabry, who encouraged me to share these lessons that have affected my life, in hopes that we can make a difference for others.

Jim Tressel

PROLOGUE

“If the game of life ended tonight, would you be a winner?”

I first heard that question asked by Bobby Richardson, the great second baseman for the New York Yankees, when I was a teenager at a Fellowship of Christian Athletes camp. Richardson was an athlete I looked up to tremendously—seven times in the World Series, MVP of the 1960 World Series, selected nine times as an all-star, and winner of five straight Gold Gloves for fielding. He was the epitome of a professional athlete. He exuded excellence. But as much of a hero as Bobby Richardson was to me, the question he asked actually troubled me greatly because I didn't have a good answer. How can you know if you're a winner?

That question has continued to intrigue me throughout my life, and in a way, it has defined my life as a son, a husband, a father, and a coach. I didn't consciously set out on a quest to answer it, but looking back, I can see how much my life has been shaped by that simple question.

To many people, winning is everything. Striving for a conference championship can be a passion that turns into an obsession. Even more, a national championship can be a goal that feels exhilarating. I've seen the positives of setting a goal and pushing a team of players to achieve it, working together and striving for something as a team. But I've also seen the destructive force of that kind of ruthless search and what it can do to young people and the coaches who try to win at all costs. Everyone wants to be a winner, but at the end of the season, only one team will stand at the top of the mountain.

So how can you know if you're a winner in life? Must we redefine the word? And if your life's game ended this second, would you consider yourself a winner? How can you measure such a thing?

The book you're holding is my attempt not only to answer those important questions but also to distill the heart of a nearly four-hundred-page handbook we give to our football players as they enter each new year at The Ohio State University.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WINNERS MANUAL

The Winners Manual originated in 1986 at Youngstown State University, where I had just been hired as head football coach. The first Winners Manual we handed out to our Penguin players was about seventy-five pages long and had a flimsy plastic cover and spiral binding that barely held the pages together. I'm not sure many of those books have stood the test of time, but the contents certainly have.

Every year since 1986, I've added a few quotes or stories, and I've deleted a few. Sometimes I worry that I have too many quotes. But you never know when a guy who is struggling with something in his life will pick up his Winners Manual and notice a quote in there. I'll hear guys talk about a quote that got stuck in their mind, and I'll think, *See, it was worth it to keep that one in there*. Even former players who are now in the NFL call and ask for the latest version of the Winners Manual. They might be in training camp, or they're having a difficult time with an injury, and it seems to offer the boost they need at the moment.

From its humble beginnings, the Winners Manual has developed into a handbook that includes everything my coaches and I think would be helpful for our players to have when they walk in the door on the first day of training camp. Today, the Winners Manual that we give our players and coaches begins with a tribute to our country and includes the Pledge of Allegiance and a section on the importance of the American flag. We even print the text of the Gettysburg Address by Abraham Lincoln.

Next comes a section on Ohio State football, our mission statement, songs such as "The Buckeye Battle Cry," "Across the Field," and "Hang on Sloopy," plus copies of several letters I've come across from great coaches such as Paul Brown and Woody Hayes.

Then we get into what we call The Plan. It's a step-by-step process of personal assessment and goal setting that the players find helpful. We take each player on a journey of success and introduce him to the Block O of Life, which we'll discuss shortly.

After sections covering our preseason and in-season travel and activities, our policies-and-procedures regulations—everything from personal

conduct rules to the confidentiality of the playbook—we eventually get to the fundamentals for winners that make up the bulk of the Winners Manual. This is our “tools” section, in which we try to give each player the personal and team tools he’ll need to succeed.

For the purposes of this book, we’ve boiled nineteen fundamentals down to ten chapters. Of course, we can’t include all the material from the Winners Manual here, but we’ve tried to give you the heart of it—the sayings and ideas that have stood out to our players.

Through the years, I’ve asked for input regarding the contents of the book. Every year, a player or coach will come up to me and say, “Hey, this would be a great addition to the Winners Manual.” That’s how it began to grow, and as you can imagine, within a few years it expanded from seventy-five pages to a mammoth volume that needed pruning.

The process of addition and subtraction is simple. I have a box in my office in which I collect things I’ve read or have been given. Every year, in late May or early June, I sort through the contents of the box, looking for new material for the Winners Manual. Then I rewrite certain sections, adding and subtracting, to keep the Winners Manual fresh but also of a manageable size.

I didn’t think then, and I don’t think now, that we’re doing anything revolutionary with this resource. The strength of the tool is that it represents a concerted effort to present thoughts that deserve attention, reinforcement, and practice in our players’ lives. I think we’ve put a little order to it, but most of this material is available in other places in other forms. I like our players to take their Winners Manuals back to their rooms to read during preseason, when they hate the two-a-days and want to quit and go home. Things get difficult during preseason because it’s hot, the players are tired, and they just want to get to the games. They’re asking, “Why in the world did I come to this place?”

During those times, I hope the guys will leaf through the book and find something refreshing or something that ignites a fire inside to keep them going another day. The thought-provoking wisdom in the Winners Manual gives them a perspective outside of themselves. It may give

confidence to someone struggling to measure up. It may spur a player to a greater commitment to The Plan. Four years later, when that player is giving his senior speech, he'll say, "I remember when I was a freshman and I was going to quit. I read this quote, and I want to share it with you because it kept me going and really made the difference for me."

That is my goal with this version of the Winners Manual. If you're struggling with your place in the world, if things have become difficult and you feel like giving up, or if you don't know whether or not you are a winner, I hope that in some small way, this book can be a tool used for good in your life. I want to present ideas, principles, and truths in a way that will encourage you, lift you up when you're wrestling with life, and push you forward and motivate you to be a better person and a more vital part of whatever team you serve.

Over the course of the past twenty-or-so years, I've been rereading a lot of the same messages and quotes and sayings from people who have offered part of their lives and wisdom to me. I'm grateful to be around this game and the people who've allowed me to appropriate much of their wisdom. For me, it all began in my early years, growing up right next door to a football stadium.

THE LIGHT IN THE WINDOW

My father, Lee Tressel, coached at Baldwin-Wallace College, a small, Division III school in Berea, Ohio. Division III coaches weren't paid much back then, but the college gave my father an on-campus house to live in. The house was not only next door to the stadium, it was also right across the street from the athletic center and my father's office. As a result, I got to watch what my dad did every day, to see the impact he had on young people's lives, and to witness how much people enjoyed being a part of the collegiate football experience. I can still remember the feeling of looking out in the evening after dinner, darkness descending, and seeing the light on in the window of his office in the gymnasium, where he was busy making calls to recruits.

I had a chance to play for my father and to see the game from a

different angle. Then, after realizing that my dream of playing in the NFL wasn't going to happen, I decided that coaching would be a good way to use the skills I felt God had given me. I was an assistant coach for several schools, and I picked up a little advice here, a little wisdom there, and discovered things that really made sense to me. I vowed if I ever had the chance to be a head coach, I would share the things I'd been taught by these great teachers I had known and loved.

In those days, I was a huge fan of Coach John Wooden of UCLA. I still am. His teams were on an incredible roll in NCAA basketball, and we got to watch them perhaps once a year on television. (Things have come a long way in televised sports since the 1970s.) In order to learn from these great coaches, you couldn't go to a seminar or look them up on the Internet; you had to get a book to study and try to integrate their approaches. I studied Coach Wooden's philosophy—the Pyramid of Success—as well as the work of other coaches who embodied the teachings of my father or the things I strongly believed. You always think you have all the answers until suddenly, you're in charge. So in the fall of 1986, when I became a head coach at Youngstown State, I started compiling the *Winners Manual*, with the help of my coaches, and each year we've added to it.

I want to make it crystal clear at the outset that what we've experienced and developed is an accumulation of lessons learned from others. I have been extremely blessed to work for Jim Dennison at Akron, Tom Reed at Miami of Ohio, Dick MacPherson at Syracuse, and Earle Bruce at Ohio State and alongside some of the finest assistant coaches in all of college football. When I was at Youngstown State and had a little more time every year than I do now, I would spend a week each year studying other coaches at places such as the University of Washington, Florida State, the University of Texas, the University of Colorado, Baylor University, and the Air Force Academy, as well as the San Francisco 49ers and other schools and organizations. I examined these schools and teams from top to bottom and scrutinized everything they did. Even if I got just one little nugget from that week away, I felt that it was worth it for me. So I want to make sure you understand that I'm not standing on some mountaintop

casting down all my wisdom to the people in the valley. I'm sharing the fruit of the good fortune I've had of being around wonderful people and having great experiences.

THE HEART OF THE WINNERS MANUAL

Throughout the years, the Winners Manual has taken various shapes and sizes. We add and delete items as needed, and that has become an organic process used to fit the players' personalities and the situations of our teams each year. But there are a few constants. Every Winners Manual, no matter what the layout happens to be, has the word *TEAM*—which stands for Together Everyone Achieves More—above every other word on the cover of the book. That's not just a symbol. It is the substance of everything we do, everything we talk about, and everything we try to instill in our players. We talk about it a lot, because in all we do, *TEAM* always comes first.

One of the concepts our players hear about each year, no matter how many years ago they played for us, is the idea of having an “attitude of gratitude.” That's a good place to begin, because the concept of living gratefully, and the other ideas you'll read about, are not original with me or with any of the men and women I've been fortunate enough to work with over the past three decades. So many people have contributed to the tools in this book—what we'll call the Big Ten Fundamentals. These teachings have been passed down by my father, coaches I've known and read about, and players who have taught me a lot about winning and losing, life, love, and giving. So before I go any further, I want to pay tribute to them and express my gratitude for the input they've had in my life.

Bottom line, this is the system we've used at Ohio State for the past seven years and the system we came up with at Youngstown State in 1986. It's a people-building tool that helps players become the leaders they desire to be. And you're going to read plenty about football in these pages. But in a great sense, this is not a book about football as much as it is about life.

It's also important for you to know that this *isn't* a book that has

all the answers. I'm a bit hesitant about sharing "keys for a successful life," because I don't pretend to have all the keys or even to know where some of them are. My original title for this book was *A Winners Manual*, because I don't want to be perceived as someone who thinks he has all the answers.

Having said that, I really believe this approach helps develop a whole person, not just a great football player. That's our goal—to see someone walk through the door as a freshman and walk out the door four or five years later as a well-rounded student, player, son, friend, and citizen.

Because I have learned a lot more from losing than I've ever learned from winning, I'm going to show you a lot of the mistakes I've made and grown from. You're also going to read stories about players who chose "team" over "self" and were rewarded greatly for their attitude.

It would be the height of arrogance for me to say that this is the only way to a "winning life." That's not my purpose. My goal is to honestly set forth some principles that I've seen work in the relationship between a coach and a player, principles that motivate people to reach for goals that may seem a bit out of their grasp and to embrace a life of success and satisfaction that many people seem unable to achieve.

One more thing I want to clarify about our students. In no way do I want to give the impression that players come into our program morally deficient or with no development in their character, we give them a "magic book," and suddenly they've gone from delinquent people to shining examples of humanity. That's just not the way it is. The players who come to The Ohio State University are some of the best in the country. They're great kids who have already had a lot of input from parents, extended family, and other coaches. Mentors have, many times, poured their lives into these young men, so they come to us with rich life experiences, and they are people with great character and conscience. What we offer them is a four- or five-year program that focuses on each of them as a person. They grow and develop in the crucible of Buckeye football, which is not an easy thing to do. We're giving them more tools to help them develop and putting them in learning situations that take them

further down the same road they've been on for eighteen years. They have many of the basics already ingrained in them, but we offer a reinforcement of the importance of those things that crystallizes their thinking.

That's where you come in. No matter where you are in your development, whether you're a young person starting out or you're already in your retirement years, if you want to personally progress in your life and become a team player with those around you, I think this book will help. It is intended as an interactive tool for anyone—coaches, teachers, parents, businesspeople, or anyone else who has influence on others. If you struggle with the concept of purpose in your life and with setting tangible, realistic goals, I believe this book can be a pivotal point in your development.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

When we get together each morning in preseason to go through the Winners Manual, we have what we call our Quiet Time. We start in our team meeting room—a large lecture hall—and each player has his Winners Manual along with his defensive notebook or whatever is on the schedule next. Try visualizing this: one hundred or more guys of every size and shape, from three-hundred-pound linemen to tall, thin receivers, all with their heads down, scribbling something they're grateful for in their manuals and reading the section assigned for the day. After they jot down something they're thankful for, they're able to use the next eight to twelve minutes of quiet to help them develop their inner person.

The great thing about this exercise is that every person will come away with something different from the exact same material. It's so amazing what will strike them. I usually ask a question about what they've read, in order to get some feedback so that the other players can hear how their teammates see a statement or story. After they get comfortable, I don't have to call on anyone; they simply raise their hands and describe something that happened in a game or in practice or in class that struck them as relevant to what they've just read.

A guy will raise his hand, and as he's sharing, I'm thinking, *I've known*

this kid since I sat in his living room with his parents, and that quote spoke to him? It's an awesome process to go through each day, and I learn way more than the players do every year.

I can't be there in your home to hear your perspective, but figuratively you can raise your hand and respond to something you've read and write it down. That's why we've developed Questions for Reflection at the end of each chapter. These are designed for your own soul-searching and to help you grapple with the real-life issues you face each day. You might even get with a group of people and walk through these chapters. You'll be surprised at how much you'll learn from others if you do.

The final section of each chapter is called Your Personal Game Plan. Here, we take each section of the Block O of Life and lead you in specific ways you can grow in that area. Whether it's your health, your career pursuits, your family, or another part of your purpose or goals, this will be the most practical part of the book. Try not to skip over those sections, but don't let them overwhelm you either. You might concentrate on only one section of the Personal Game Plan on a given day or during an entire week; that's all right. Relax and let the material soak in and help you grow.

THE GAME PLAN OF THIS BOOK

This version of the Winners Manual has been designed with three sections. We present Part 1 to you as The Game Plan. This section lays the groundwork for all of the fundamentals. We talk about success as a journey and about having a plan, goals, and dreams—that's the beginning of the process.

We also deal with the basic blueprint of our program, which we call the Block O of Life. When you understand the six components of the *O*, the difference between your purpose and your goals, you'll be ready to move on to the Big Ten Fundamentals. But keep in mind that throughout the book, you'll refer to the Block O often, returning to it chapter by chapter—in the content of the chapter as well as in Your Personal Game Plan.

Part 2 describes the Big Ten Fundamentals, a series of chapters on the bedrock building blocks of attitude, discipline, excellence, faith and belief, work, handling adversity and success, love, responsibility, team, and hope. These are not meant to be read in one sitting and put back on the shelf. My guess is that you may read one quote and have to stop for a while. Or you'll want to tear out a page and give it to a friend who's struggling in that area.

Part 3 features some of the most important people in my life. We call this section Game Changers. These are the stories of people who have poured their lives into mine. They have personally inspired me and helped me put life on the field into perspective. I can only hope that in sharing their stories, you, too, will be inspired to embrace life as they have.

Finally, in the Epilogue, I'll tell you more about the question we began with: "If the game of life ended tonight, would you be a winner?" The answer to that question is vitally important.

Throughout the book, I'll refer often to our football Winners Manual, the handbook we give to our players at Ohio State. The first 30 percent of that handbook contains game schedules, practice schedules, guidelines for good media relationships, and other "inside" information that we keep just between our players and coaches. The "guts" of the book, however—the part that can really help focus your life and make you a better person no matter what type of team you're on—you'll find here, in the book you're holding.

I've always been the kind of person who is looking for that little bit of guidance that can help me in my passion to do God's will or find my purpose. When I attend a coaching clinic, I'm there soaking it all in, looking for a gold nugget I can take back and implement. Similarly, I've searched for books and other tools to help me along the way. My hope for you is that this book will prove to be a useful tool that will help you move toward your purpose and the accomplishment of your goals. If any part of this manual clicks for you and helps explain some things about life, if you pick up one thing that will help you move forward, then it was worth writing.

Over the years, I have read several books and heard several messages

that have been pivotal in my life. The speech by Bobby Richardson comes to mind, as well as the writings of Coach John Wooden. If reading this book becomes a pivotal moment for you and opens your eyes and heart to things beyond what you have previously thought were important, then we've really scored. It'll be a true winner.





PART 1: THE GAME PLAN

CHAPTER 1

THE JOURNEY OF SUCCESS

DECIDE YOUR PURPOSE, SET YOUR GOALS

*If you do the things you need to do
When you need to do them,
Someday you can do the things you want to do
When you want to do them!*

DEVELOPING VISION

The first step in creating an improved future is developing the ability to envision it.

- *Vision will ignite the fire of passion, which fuels our commitment to do whatever it takes to achieve excellence.*
- *Vision allows us to transform dreams of greatness into the reality of achievement through human action.*
- *Vision has no boundaries and knows no limits. Our vision is what we become in life.*

Fame usually comes to those who are thinking about something else.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

*Rejoice in our confident hope.
Be patient in trouble,
And keep on praying.*

ROMANS 12:12

Success is a journey that we all take, and it affects every phase of our lives. In order to thrive during that journey, we have to have a clear view of what success is, what it isn't, and what it will take to achieve it. In this chapter, we will discuss a method we use with our players at Ohio State to help them understand what personal and team success is, and

to help them set goals, pursue their dreams, and come up with a life plan for moving forward.

Many people define success by how much money they make or how far up the corporate ladder they can ascend. Coaches or athletes can define it in terms of championships, winning records, or great individual statistics. Championships and wins are fine goals. I want Ohio State to be the last team standing at the end of the year, no question about it. We tell the players that we're going to work like crazy on our team goals, and if they don't want to be champions, they're probably on the wrong team. But we also help them devise plans for how to obtain the goals they desire as individuals. We encourage our players to pursue the NFL, if that's what they want to do. But if a player says, "I really want to excel at football, but I feel that medicine is my life's calling," we help that player map out a plan to make it to medical school. It might be medical school, law school, or some other career path, but we want to help every player achieve his goals.

Goals are important, but it's important to understand that people are not *defined* by their goals and whether or not they reach them. A win or a loss does not make you or me a better or worse human being. This is where, in our society, we've so easily lost perspective on the truth about *who we are*. We have to separate who we *are* from what we *do*. With our players, it's vital to distinguish between "purpose" and "goals," as you'll see when we introduce a concept called the Block O of Life in the next chapter. Understanding the difference between purpose and goals is essential to understanding the true definition of success.

John Wooden, the legendary UCLA basketball coach, is one of my heroes. In his classic autobiography, *They Call Me Coach*, he defines the elusive quality of success: "Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best you are capable of becoming."

That's a great definition. First, it takes away any external characterization of success—conference championship, national championship, awards—and puts the responsibility on the individual to define his own success. Trophies, rings, or trips to the White House do not mean you're

a success. Success is found in “peace of mind.” That was a revolutionary thought to me. I don’t have to look to others to tell me whether I’ve made it. They can’t tell me anything about my success, because they have no idea if I have peace of mind. That’s a radical shift in thinking and drastically different from basing my success on whether I win or lose. I grew up in a coach’s house, and believe me, I can tell the difference between a weekend after a win and a weekend after a loss. But in Coach Wooden’s definition, I can rest in the satisfaction of knowing I did my best at becoming my best. That helps me to know if I’ve done all I can do.

Coach Wooden wrote his definition in 1972, at a time when many people defined success by the kinds of cars they drove, the houses they lived in, what jobs they had, and what material possessions they owned. In other words, it was a lot like it is today. But Wooden’s description of success transcends the dictionary definition. It’s not the accumulation of material possessions or the gaining of a certain amount of prestige or rank. It’s not moving up the ladder at work, becoming famous, or gaining political power. We try to help our guys understand that success is being the best they can be, and feeling good about that, but then going one step further.

FOR THE GROUP

In defining success at Youngstown State and Ohio State, we built on the thoughts of Coach Wooden and added one tiny but powerful idea. We expanded his definition like this: “Success is the inner satisfaction and peace of mind that come from knowing I did the best I was capable of doing *for the group*.”

Success is a team sport. As Woody Hayes said many years ago, “You win with people.” When we added “for the group” to Coach Wooden’s definition, we helped to focus our players on the *team* aspect of success.

Our purpose in adding “for the group” was to capture the truth that in being our best, we add to those around us. It forces us to define success in terms of what the group needs, what our team needs, or what our society or country needs. You can see the problem of individualism in sports

as well as in society. People tend to worry more about how something affects “me,” as opposed to how it affects “us.” But if we focus on what we ourselves can get rather than on what we can do for the team, we’ll miss a great opportunity.

From a personal standpoint, that’s why I consider it part of my job to go to hospitals or help out with fund-raisers for various groups. That’s part of the opportunity I’ve been given as a head coach—to make a difference, not just on the sidelines of a football game, but also in a world of hurting people. Success is not only helping myself; it’s helping others reach their goals.

However, there’s a potential problem at a place like Ohio State. Because so many talented athletes represent our school, some of them could take the approach that the group really doesn’t matter. The main concern could be for the individual to make it to the NFL. The player could have a selfish perspective and say, “I need X number of catches. I need X number of tackles. I need more touches at running back so I can get more yards and gain a bigger signing bonus when it’s time for the draft.” Fortunately, we choose our players wisely, and they buy into the team concept readily, but there’s always a temptation to play for themselves rather than for the team.

Fans also present a problem with success because they expect the team to win every game. They’ll be upset if we don’t win the national championship every year. That’s the nature of being a fan, and we appreciate their backing and thrive on the support they give. But winning every game every year is an unrealistic expectation. The truth is, only one team will win the Bowl Championship Series (BCS). Only one team out of thirty-two in the NFL will win the Super Bowl. In life, not everyone can be the top salesman at a company or get the big promotion. Not everyone starts a business and sees it grow and thrive and expand. So we try to help our players avoid tying their definition of success to their performance. This prepares them for their lives ahead and teaches them that though their *performance* connects directly with their *goals*, their *purpose* is tied to *who they are*.

In 2006, we were disappointed, not because we didn't win every game, but because we felt we didn't play anywhere near our ability. We were disappointed in the national-championship game after the 2007 season, not because we didn't play up to our ability, but because we made a couple of costly mistakes against a great team. And when you play a great team in their own backyard, you can't afford to make mistakes.

The difference for us was that our self-image wasn't crushed after those seasons. Our players and coaches had a handle on their purpose. They felt good about their contribution to the team. Even though we didn't achieve all of our goals, we were still successful.

Jerry Jenkins, coauthor of the best-selling *Left Behind* book series, makes a similar point about the stories he writes. He says, "Regardless of what we write, from books to articles, they should never simply be *about* something. They must always be *for the purpose* of something." So it is with our lives. We were created not just to exist, not just to pass through this world and be *about* something, but to live with *purpose*. Fulfilling our purpose is part of who we are. But what we're about—the goals we set, the dreams we have—is part of what we do.

We must never let goals, adversity—or even success—define us. Those things don't hit at the heart of who we are. We'll talk more about this important concept in the chapter on handling adversity and success, but in the meantime, let me give you an example from the NFL. Dan Marino, the great Miami Dolphins quarterback, was amazingly talented and set a lot of records at his position, yet he never won a Super Bowl. You would hope that Dan Marino doesn't gauge his career by its lack of a Super Bowl trophy. Equally, you would hope that he doesn't hang his worth as a person on those passing records. The reason he should feel good about himself is so much bigger than any record or championship ring. If a person measures his success by his inner satisfaction and the peace of mind that comes from knowing he did the best he was capable of doing for the group, he'll be able to gauge that success correctly.

By any objective standard, Dan Marino was a success, but only he

knows for sure. That question has to be answered by the individual, because only the individual knows whether he or she has the inner peace that comes with success.

Many people want to know what goes on in the locker room after a championship win or loss. I don't let cameras into the locker room after the game. Win or lose, that's our time as a team, and I don't feel that we need to have it recorded. It's recorded in our hearts, and that's enough.

After our loss to Louisiana State University in the BCS national-championship game in January 2008, I remember expressing how proud I was of all my players. I was proud of their accomplishments throughout the season. I couldn't help but think back on all the hard work and preparation it had taken to get to that game in New Orleans. There were a lot of people who never thought we would play for the championship that year. I didn't say much about that during the season because I knew our guys believed we would be there. They had great faith in our team and ignored the talk. I mostly told them how proud I was to be part of that team, how hard I thought they had played and prepared, and how well they had represented Ohio State that night. At times like that, you talk a little from the heart about your appreciation for those guys who won't be back. It's their last game as Buckeyes, and that's tough.

The interesting thing about the media is that they're always asking questions about this moment or that moment and what happened when we were all together. But it's not about a moment. The other coaches and I didn't have to pontificate about how we felt about those guys and how much we appreciated them, because every day since training camp, we had been reinforcing that. We didn't have to make "the big speech," because we'd been pouring our lives into those players for four or five years, and the players had been responding to us every day.

Success is an everyday proposition. It isn't defined by a championship game or the day you get your diploma, get drafted by an NFL team, make the big sale, land the account of a lifetime, or get your law degree. Don't get me wrong, those are great days, and we should celebrate those accomplishments. But the key to a successful life is in the journey and

the process. It's that emphasis on the *journey* to success that we work on each day, step by step.

I know that sportswriters want something earthshaking to write about—to describe that moment with our team when we're together and the emotions are high. Those reporters want to let the reader get a glimpse inside the locker room. But the truth is, there was a lot that went into those moments of celebration or grief, a lot that happened long before those “locker-room moments.” To me, the process is what's most fun in football, and I'm sure it's that way for any profession. The process of going full bore into the season and balancing your purpose with your goals and the family you love and all the things you try to accomplish—it's a daily adventure.

I guess the specifics of what happened in that locker room in New Orleans will have to stay with the team. But you can be sure that those guys knew how their coaches felt about their effort, their passion, and their work. And most of all, they knew how we felt about *who they are*. That night, we didn't do what we wanted to do on the field, but that didn't change who we are.

When we won the national championship at Ohio State in 2002, I used to chuckle at all the talk about how we'd finally pulled off the big win. I tried to get across to the team that we were champions long before we won that game against Miami. Suddenly, the media wanted to talk about our players and how much community service they do and how strong they are academically—just because we won the game. But all of that stuff was going on long before we ever won the championship. It was all part of the process.

It's hard in today's society to keep success in its proper perspective and not base our sense of self-worth on what we do. But if you can get there, it's such a comfort. If we lose a game, we're not losers—that's not who we are. And by the same token, if we win a game, that doesn't make us wonderful people. We achieved our goal, and that has its place, but that success—or any failure—doesn't define us.

The thing we should most enjoy about any endeavor is the road we

travel together to get there. I've coached in ten national-championship games, nine as head coach. That's extraordinary. Some people coach their whole lives without making it to the "big game," so I've been very fortunate. Most of the time, at the end of those games—we've won five and lost five—we've experienced a bit of melancholy. You know the group you've just traveled with will never be together again in this same way, and that's a little sad, even if you've won. You're sitting there an hour after all the confetti has fallen; the game is over, and you're looking at someone's empty locker, and you know he's heading to the NFL. A guy across from him is off to graduate school. It's in those times that you see it really isn't about one game. One game is just that—one game.

When we won the final game in 2002, we still needed to work on our academics. We still needed to be involved in the community. There were still sick kids at the hospital who would light up when our players walked into the room to talk with them. Nothing had changed except that we'd won the game.

This perspective translates well to the salesman who didn't make the sale, or to the mom who yelled at her kids and then felt really bad about it. In either case, it was just one incident; it doesn't define who you are.

I guess if I could send a healthy message to anyone who reads this book—whether you're a business owner, you work for a corporation, you're a coach, a player, or a mother of three—it would be that no matter what circumstances are in your past and no matter what obstacles you face in the future, *you can win in the game of life*. You can succeed as long as you define success as the inner satisfaction and peace of mind that come from knowing you did the best you were capable of doing for the group.

In the next chapter, we'll go into more detail about the difference between your *purpose* and your *goals* and how that works in your life. But it's important to know that the journey we're on encompasses the totality of life. We have a family journey, an academic or career journey, and a spiritual journey. With our players, we have a football journey that's closely tied with their health journey. Because success in all aspects of the

journey is measured by our inner satisfaction and peace of mind knowing we did the best we could for the group, we want our players to think through what it's going to take to feel successful.

THE GOAL SHEET

Each year, we have the guys fill out what we call a goal sheet (see page 12). On the left side are all the components of the Block O, which we'll explain in the next chapter. The most helpful thing about the process of goal setting is that it makes the players *think*. I love it when they say, "I've never thought about that, Coach. I've never written down any goals in my life." They have these ideas in their heads, they have a vague sense of what they may want to do in life, but they've never taken the time to sit down, think it through, and put it down on paper. There are probably many people who have never gone through that process. They may be successful in a career, but they've never taken the time to really focus on what's most important to them and to see their lives from a more holistic perspective.

In the yearly evaluation process, I'll talk with a player about something he's written down. In the "General Thoughts" section beside the Spiritual/Moral component, it says, "Above all else, I realize that my spiritual beliefs and my moral values will shape my life. I will do what is right!"

If a player writes in that section of his goal sheet, "I want to go to church more," I may look at him and say, "Okay. That's a good goal. But define 'more' for me. What is it? Do you want to go to church once a month? twice a month? every week? This is your goal, not mine." We urge each player to get as specific as possible so that we can evaluate how he's doing with that goal. If the player is a Christian and writes down, "I want to read the Bible more," I'll have him put a number on that. Do you want to read the Bible every night? twice a week? This type of exercise helps a player focus and decide what's really important in that particular area of his life.

The next four sections on the goal sheet are "Short-Range Goals," "How I Plan to Accomplish My Short-Range Goals," "Dreams," and "How I Plan to Accomplish My Dreams." I constantly remind the players that

THE BLOCK O OF LIFE: GOALS

GOALS MUST BE SPECIFIC AND MEASURABLE.

	General Thoughts	Short-Range Goals	How I Plan to Accomplish My Short-Range Goals	Dreams	How I Plan to Accomplish My Dreams
Personal					
Family	The family is the basic social unit of our society. My family is very important to me.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Spiritual					
Moral	Above all else, I realize that my spiritual beliefs and my moral values will shape my life. I will do what is right!	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Caring					
Giving	How I function as a total person in society is important. I will give back to my community.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Health					
Fitness	One of the greatest gifts we have is our health. My physical conditioning is a controllable commodity. I will develop lifetime fitness habits.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Your Team					
Academics					
Career	I am in school to achieve academically and obtain a valuable degree. I want to grow both productively and profitably in my career.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

PURPOSE

GOALS

Name: _____ Date: _____

goals must be specific and measurable. They take the better part of a week to complete this sheet, and when they're through, there's not a white spot on the page because they've written so much.

Once a year, we meet with the players to check their progress toward the goals they wrote the previous year. At that point, they can revise or modify their goals and make them even more specific.

I love reading the goals of our players. They talk about things they'll do after they make the NFL. "I'm going to build my high school a new stadium," or "I'm going to start a foundation back in my hometown so less-fortunate kids can go to college." Those types of things make me proud of our players. They show a lot of compassion. Those types of goals and dreams will give them a better feeling of accomplishment than, "I'm going to buy a Bentley." Now, there's nothing wrong with owning a Bentley if that's something a player would like. But I hope those material possessions don't become his primary passion and come to define him, because he's going to find that after he gets one Bentley, he's going to want two or three or six.

It's important to let our goals spring from our purpose. It makes sense that if we're going to do the best we can do, our best should come from who we really are. If we're self-focused, wanting good things for ourselves alone, that's going to affect the goals we set. If we're focused on others and on what we can do for them and the team we have around us, that will affect our goals as well.

We use the goal sheet to find out what's important to the individual players, and then we build a program they can use that's based on what's important to them. Ultimately, we get to know our players better through this process. We find out about a player's background, what makes him tick, and what he hopes for down the road. It's an exciting process to go through.

I've learned a lot by using the goal sheet with our players. I tell them that my passion is to help them achieve their goals, but I want their goals to encompass all of life and not just football. Inevitably, 80 to 85 percent of our players will have strong spiritual goals.

“I want to be part of a church,” one player will say.

Okay, I can help him find a church.

“I want to start reading the Bible,” another will say.

That’s an easy one. I can help him with some devotional tools.

The bottom line of this exercise is that when players begin to understand their purpose in life, their goals will automatically flow from that. And it’s my belief that the harder people work on the whole package of purpose and goals, the better they’re going to be for the people around them. I don’t have empirical data to back it up, but I believe the more we’ve helped our young people discover their purpose and set specific, measurable goals for their whole lives, the more games we’ve won.

Personally, when times aren’t good and our team is in a losing streak, I go back to the fundamentals. Over the course of my career, when I’ve returned to focus on my purpose, it has helped me get more grounded. So if you’re a salesman, I promise that if you work hard on your purpose—your spiritual component, your family life, and the caring and giving component—you’re going to be a better salesman. Without question, I believe the more you work on the whole, the better you will be at every one of the parts.

If you have a plan for your purpose, I think you’ll be a better mother, a better teacher, a better cornerback or left fielder or welder. And the more defined your purpose becomes, the better you will be at your goals. I’m thinking of a dad who might be reading this, and the more he reads, the more he thinks, *I want to be a better father*. Maybe he sees that he’s come up a little short on the caring and giving component. As he works on that, his relationship with his children will grow deeper. But he’ll find that his relationship with his wife will grow as well. And if he lets that caring and giving spill over into his other relationships, he’ll become better at every other aspect of his life.

Have you taken time lately to sit and think about why you’re here? How would you respond if I were to ask, “What is your purpose in life?” Out of that purpose will flow the goals, dreams, and desires you want to accomplish. Let me challenge you to utilize the goal sheet we

give our players. (You can download a full-size copy of the goal sheet at www.thewinnersmanual.com.) Spend some time going through your short-range goals and how you plan to accomplish them, and your dreams and how you plan to accomplish them. Don't rush through the assignment. Think it through, and see what types of things come out of this worthy exercise.

CREDITS

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“Coach Wooden on Criticism and Praise” is adapted from *Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections On and Off the Court* by John Wooden and Steve Jamison (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1997), 146–147.

“Giving When It Counts” is taken from “On Courage” by Dan Millman, in *Chicken Soup for the Soul* by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1993), 27.

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“There is a choice . . .” is from *The Essential Wooden: A Lifetime of Lessons on Leaders and Leadership* by John Wooden and Steve Jamison (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 125.

“Old Warwick” adapted from *Some Folks Feel the Rain: Others Just Get Wet* by James W. Moore (Nashville: Dimensions for Living, 1999), 104–105.

“Follow My Voice” is taken from “Discipline, training saved lives in aftermath of Pentagon attack,” by Ron Kampeas, Associated Press, September 17, 2001. Article can be read online at http://www.cjonline.com/stories/091701/ter_training.shtml.

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In the course of his coaching career, Tressel has been named the Chevrolet National Coach of the Year ('93, '94, and '97); the American Coaches Association National Coach of the Year ('91, '94, and '02); the Eddie Robinson National Coach of the Year ('94 and '02); and the AFCA Regional Coach of the Year ('87 and '93). He has also been selected seven times as Ohio College Coach of the Year.

Coach Tressel is actively involved with the American Football Coaches Association, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Alpha Tau Omega, The Ohio State University Medical Center, and the William Oxley Thompson Library.

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