



The Criminal Justice Institute's

Management Quarterly

Winter 2007

Wins, Losses, and Lessons:

The Autobiography of Lou Holtz

By Donald H. Kidd

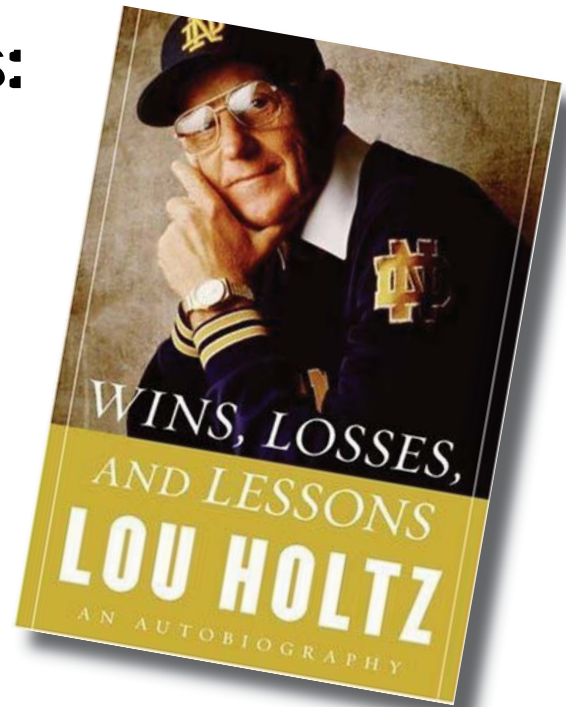
If you have attended management courses at the Criminal Justice Institute, you may have been exposed to famed football coach Lou Holtz's "Do Right" rules—*Do what's right. Avoid what's wrong.* These "Do Right" rules were instituted by Holtz the moment he took his first head-coaching position. His adherence to these rules have made him one of the most respected leaders in recent history.

Few people in college football have been more influential or had a bigger impact than Holtz. He was the winner of three national "Coach of the Year" honors, is the only coach ever to lead six different schools to season-ending bowl games, and ranks ninth in wins as a coach in college football history. In 1988, his Norte Dame Fighting Irish won the national college football title.

In his new autobiography, *Wins, Losses, and Lessons*, Holtz shares anecdotes from his life that illustrate the tremendous impact we can all have on the people around us if we make a conscious effort to *do what's right and avoid what's wrong.* In this issue of the *CJI Management Quarterly*, we'll share some principles from his book that could greatly enhance your leadership style.

First Impressions Have Lasting Results

If you are to succeed in your profession, you must have an enthusiasm, excitement, and interest in your organization. Then show diligence and a willingness to



work hard. In football, those players who hang on the coach's every word, who go out of their way to show enthusiasm and commitment to the coach's philosophy, and who work hard every day are the ones who earn the coach's respect and praise. Those who go through the motions and show contempt or complacency for the coach's teachings, even though they might be talented players, rarely do well.

Every law enforcement professional knows the importance of image and its impact on the public. Holtz recounts arriving at Fort Knox a day before he had to report for military duty, checking into a motel, getting a good night's sleep, showering, shaving, and putting on his freshly pressed dress uniform before reporting to the Commanding Officer. Others, who had driven all night, arrived wrinkled, disheveled, and in need of a shave.

The base commander, impressed by his appearance, struck up a conversation which led to his being an instructor in military justice and on the shooting and grenade range. It was a good job which Holtz felt he would not have gotten if he had not dressed well that day.

Throughout his career, he taught this to every athlete he coached. Every team wore coats and ties on and off the buses on game days. Anyone who had a shirttail out of place made that mistake only once. He was unyielding when it came to enforcing the team dress and appearance code. If you meet a hundred people a day, a judgment will be made by each of these individuals based on your appearance. It may not be fair but appearances matter, so make yours a good one.

Be Persistent

Persistence in achieving goals is most critical to success and happiness. Holtz believes nothing takes the place of persistence. He notes that there are many talented and educated individuals who fail to succeed because of a lack of determination. Persistence alone is omnipotent. While everyone knows that Babe Ruth hit 714 home runs, very few know that he also struck out more than thirteen hundred times.

Be Truthful With Yourself and Others

Be truthful with yourself and with others, no matter who you might offend. If you want the best from others, you have to hire good people, define what it is you want from them, and come to a common agreement on the terms and conditions of your relationship. You can voice displeasure in a positive manner so that you are not critical of a person but instead of his or her actions. When you compromise your expectations, you not only lower your own personal standards, but you do a disservice to the person whose feelings you are afraid to hurt.

Over the years, Holtz had to fire assistant coaches who were longtime friends because their performance was not up to the standards they agreed were important. He had to bench players who were great talents but simply did not get the job done. Not to fire or bench those people would have meant accepting mediocrity in order to preserve peace and harmony. This would also have been a disservice to the persons fired or benched.

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The Pygmalion Effect

The "Pygmalion Effect," a concept that people behave as they are expected to behave, is a staple of many management courses. For example, if you expect a child to pass Algebra, he is going to do what it takes to pass, not an ounce more or less. If you expect B's, communicate these expectations, and talk about the consequences for failing to meet those goals, then the student will make B's. But if you drive home an expectation of greatness (straight A's for example), communicate the rewards that will come from meeting the goal, and make known the consequences of anything less than perfection, then the student will do whatever it takes to make perfect grades.

Managers and supervisors are taught to be a positive "Pygmalion" since their expectations influence subordinates. Holtz believes that humans are capable of far more than they realize, and that each individual's performance is predicated on what's expected of him. He demanded nothing short of greatness from his players, and in response they elevated their performance far beyond anyone's expectations.

Be a Good Disciplinarian

Arkansas football enthusiasts will recall Holtz's 1977 suspension of three star players from the University of Arkansas football team before an Orange Bowl showdown with No. 1 ranked Oklahoma. The players had been involved in an incident in a college dorm with a young woman and the decision of what should be done

with these players was left solely in the hands of Holtz.

Although Holtz felt tremendous pressure from the public to let these players play in the big game, he was determined to *do what's right*. Holtz felt disciplinary action was warranted, despite the devastating impact this would undoubtedly have in the game against Oklahoma, and the players were subsequently suspended.

NBC, worried about television ratings for a game that was predicted to be a blowout, went out of its way to play up the controversy surrounding the suspensions. Arkansas entered the game as one of the biggest underdogs of the year, yet won the game 31-6 and finished the year ranked third in the nation.

"Am I a disciplinarian?" Holtz asks of himself. "Absolutely, and I do not apologize for it. There were times when I had to suspend players for violating team rules, being late, or doing poorly in the classroom. I never liked it, and often thought about overlooking the violations and giving the players a break. But that wouldn't have been fair to them. Discipline is a teaching tool."

Be Willing to Change

Throughout your life, you have undoubtedly met people who have made a tremendous impact on you. When Holtz was an assistant coach at Ohio State, working for the legendary Woody Hayes, he recounts the total commitment Hayes expected of his staff and his players. In 1968, in the third game of the season, Ohio State beat Purdue who was then ranked the number one team in the country. After the game, the staff wanted to go out on the town and celebrate the win. Coach Hayes called a staff meeting that night at 7:00 p.m. to plan for the next game. While there was some grumbling that night in the staff room, every assistant realized that Coach Hayes' demanding standards helped put Ohio State on top. Great achievements require great sacrifice, and Coach Hayes never let his coaches or his team get too high or too low, nor did he ever let them forget that each win was just one more step on the way to a national championship.

The first year as a head coach for William and Mary was not a success for Holtz. He coached like Woody Hayes, adopted the Ohio State offense and defense, intimidated his players and staff, and put them through intense

workouts. The season was a disaster with the team winning three games and losing seven.

"Self-examination can be painful but necessary," recounts Holtz. The next year they scrapped the Ohio State offense and implemented the veer to better utilize the available talent. The fortunes of William and Mary began to improve as the players and coaches become more confident in the direction the program was going.

Communicate Your Expectations

Following his tenure at William and Mary, Lou Holtz went on to coach successfully at North Carolina State, winning 33 games, losing 12, and tying 3. After an unsuccessful year with the New York Jets, Holtz became the head coach at the University of Arkansas where from 1977 through 1982 he won 60 games, lost 21, tied 2, and guided the Razorbacks to bowl wins over Oklahoma, Tulane, and Florida, and tied UCLA in 1978 in the Fiesta Bowl. Holtz next coached at Minnesota for two years, going 4 and 7 his first year, and 6 and 5 the next with a win over Clemson in the Independence Bowl.

The next head coaching job for Holtz was at Notre Dame from 1986 through 1996 where he won 100 games, lost 30, and tied 2. During this period of time, Notre Dame had bowl victories over West Virginia, Colorado, Florida, and Texas A&M.

There is little doubt that Lou Holtz did an exceptional job at Notre Dame. In an entertaining style, Holtz writes about how he went about raising expectations among the football players upon his arrival at the school. In the first team meeting, Chuck Lanza, who went on to become an All-American, had his feet propped up and was examining his fingernails. When asked how long he had been playing football, Lanza replied ten or eleven years. Holtz informed him that if he ever wanted to play another down, "you will put your feet on the floor, sit up straight, and pay attention."

In his first meeting with the team quarterback, Steve Beuerlein, who would go on to a successful career in the NFL, he pointed out that Beuerlein had a tendency to fall in love with a single receiver and throw a lot of interceptions. Holtz guaranteed Beuerlein that he would not throw more than seven interceptions next year. Beuerlein inquired whether Holtz had a special way of read-

ing defensive coverages. Holtz informed him that he did not but when Beuerlein threw the sixth interception, he was not going to play anymore.

Holtz built this team into winners by emphasizing three basic rules: *Do what is right. Do your very best. Treat others like you'd like to be treated.* These three rules are all you need, whether you are a coach, a player, a parent, a child, an employer, or an employee. Everyone you meet asks three questions mentally: Can I trust you? Are you committed to excellence? Do you care about me?"

Conclusion

This book is an entertaining autobiography of an interesting individual who writes in an often humorous style. If you like sports, and especially football, you will enjoy reading the book. Holtz goes into great detail about

people who helped shape his life and the decisions that he made that helped shape the lives of others.

Holtz is one of the highest paid motivational speakers in the United States, frequently addressing major corporations and organizations. This book, available through the CJI Library, is filled with information on motivation, expectations, goal setting, decision making, commitment, and personal success. It is not only an enjoyable book to read but one which provides a number of lessons in personal development.

For more information about *Wins, Losses and Lessons* and other management titles currently available in the CJI Library, contact Allison Hoffman at amhoffman@cji.edu or (501) 570-8061.



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University of Arkansas System
7723 Colonel Glenn Road
Little Rock, AR 72204