

As I get older, I am learning to appreciate certain moments in my life and appreciate the journey as much as I crave the result. There are few moments in our lives, when you know that no matter what; you will never ever forget where you were and how you felt when something important happens. Sunday, was a moment like that for me. Coaching is not easy nor fun all the time. I love it because it challenges me to challenge others. Some people like to live a life that is steady, not too many ups and downs, and others like me, love the challenge of taking young inexperienced football players and turning them into a national powerhouse.

Playing for me, as you know, it quite challenging. I demand a lot from myself, therefore my players as well. I have certain values, philosophies, and fundamental that I believe in and regardless of public opinion at times, I will always stand by them. I believe that team camaraderie, chemistry and teamwork is far more important than X's and O's. Team's win championships, not individuals.

I have been blessed to have some incredible moments in my professional life. I have been fortunate to travel, coach on National television, win National and World titles, but nothing; and I mean nothing; compares to the magical moment that I was able to enjoy Sunday.

Coming into this season, there was a very clear and defined goal; that the players made. It was to win the NFL National Championship. Needless to say, our journey began in late August when both teams began training. Very few parents, friends and fans really know what goes on at practice each night. To speculate would be unfair as well. Each practice is unique. We cover fundamentals, strategies, etc to go along with some yelling, screaming and joke telling and fooling around. We cover it all. I have never seen a group of players train for anything as hard as this particular group trained to win this championship; and that is saying something considering I have been coaching for many years. Countless hours of preparation, leadership training, film study, not to mention route running, passing and defense went into conquering our goals.

I believe that goal setting is very important which is why personally, I set the goal to win both championships in the same year. Who knew it would be this year with these teams. The pep rally Shabbat dinner, like I mentioned during my speech that night, was a dream come true. When the program started 10 years ago, I dreamt that 1 day I would have a program what would become 1 big family with 1 big goal.

I felt very good about the team meetings we shared Friday night. After my song, the kids went to bed, focused, yet rested with a clear understanding of what Saturday would hold and how to emotionally handle the challenge; because emotions play a very big part in sports. I woke up at 4am Saturday morning, butterflies swarming (which is the FIRE that burns inside every great competitor) and went for an hour run (where I put everything into focus). I always look forward to the bus ride to the field because everyone (all teams) still believe they have a chance at that moment and you as a coach know that the very best teams in our sport will give their best shot. As a coach or player, you want to challenge yourself against the very best.

The Juniors, Brian and I had the sole purpose of becoming the second team in NFL Flag history to win back to back Junior titles with the same core group. Anyone who knows sports knows that winning back to back anything is very hard; which is why it is so rare. I felt extremely confident in our chances because of the unbelievable "locker room" presence from the veterans of that team. In my mind, we have some of the best players at their position for their age group that has ever played flag football. I was not able to watch too much of the Junior games Saturday because of my commitments to the Seniors, however, I did get to see the final moments of the semifinal matchup versus a very good Raider team. The clutch plays from the veteran guys was amazing and ultimately led to the victory and earning us a spot in the final.

The Seniors on the other hand, has had a much longer journey than the Juniors because the majority of them started 3 and a half years ago. The majority of this team lost in this event before and have lived with the sour taste of defeat for years; just wishing and working for the opportunity

to play in it again. Losses in Buffalo and New Orleans a year ago hurt us; but made us hungrier to overcome all adversity this season. Coming into this season, I truly thought that this team could become the best senior team in Mo Steel history. I knew that with hard work we could win it all. Saturday, was a day that will ultimately go down as the day, my Senior boys became men. The semifinal game versus the Firebirds (Dolphins) was nothing short of **battle**. Our kids had every reason to quit, every reason to throw in the towel. Cramping, pulled muscles, broken fingers would not stop these incredible warriors. Play after play was made; not from fundamental athleticism, but from the HEART. The kids could barely stand. Right out of a movie. I was so proud at that moment of the passion, poise and confidence that went into winning that game.

Saturday night was great for the teams and me. We hydrated constantly, went to a the NFL beach party for a half hour or so, did our media obligations and went into our team meeting with our goal in reach. We went over our game plans in detail and I was quite confident that the kids understood what was expected from them from an X's and O's stand point. I speak quite often about my favorite word; OPPORTUNITY and being ready for yours when it comes. We spoke at length about the challenges of Sunday. We were ready for the battles. I have been coaching long enough to know that regardless of previous outcomes, both opponents would provide us with the challenge only worthy for a championship game and our teams needed to be prepared for that. I played the same songs for both teams this weekend. "World's Greatest" from R. Kelly and "I Believe" from Fantasia. Both songs talk about overcoming obstacles and believing in yourself. I felt pretty good about where my players heads were going into Sunday.

For the Juniors, watching the championship game from the stands gave me a new perspective of my Junior team; whom obviously I adore and have the utmost respect for. I saw them play as a fan. I saw from their intensity, their execution and their will to win from a fans view. A part of me is jealous that the fans get to enjoy that view all the time, especially watching this team play. They will go down in NFL Flag history as one of; if the THE best Junior team ever. Their clutch plays, brilliant play calling and leadership from Belochi and their unbelievable team SPIRIT brought them to the title once again. Like Larry Foote, from the Steelers told them on Friday night... "you will always remember your championships"! This group did it again!

The Seniors were a team possessed; with the vision and sole purpose of redeeming past failures, living up to their potential, defeating a team that defeated us earlier in the tournament and most importantly, doing it together as a TEAM. We were undersized compared to our opponents and any random fan would have thought Mo Steel was going down; especially after the first play of the game which was an interception. Our game plan was to challenge them deep, because I saw weakness on film in their secondary which is why personally, at that moment, I did not have a problem with the outcome of the play. Even though we gave up possession, we gave their defense something to think about the entire game, which is why our short game was so successful during the game. Our kids played their hearts out; never taking a play off or losing their focus. The kids battled back from every challenge that our opponents gave and never backed down. They played with the heart, passion and competitive greatness that we talk about all the time. As time ran was running out, I could not help but think of Feld, Brodsky and Jake and how happy I was for them (having lost in Buffalo a year ago) and how proud I was of them and how far they have come as leaders, teammates, athletes and competitors. I also thought about the other members of the team and how thankful I was to have them in my life to share this championship with. Emotions were running strong at that moment and running onto the field to hug my guys is something that I dreamt about many times and at that moment, my dream became my reality... 2 championships on the same day!

Muhammad Ali once said, "Champions are made from something they have deep inside them – a desire, a dream, a vision. They have to have the skill, and the will. But the will must be stronger than the skill." This quote defines Mo Steel and the players whom play on it. The atmosphere was something out of a movie. Our fans truly provided us with a home field advantage. Playing in that venue at Dolphins Stadium, before the Pro Bowl in front of people who have heard about our

program but never saw it in person was special for the kids and I. I am very grateful for the support all the families have provided the program.

Gary and Brian are my right hand guys. Unless you are a fly on the wall, you will never understand what they mean to the program, but more importantly me. Their friendship, guidance, support and leadership are essential to the success of this program and I am not writing this email today without them. Brian did a masterful job coaching the Juniors to the title. The kids adore him and we provide the perfect balance for each other and the team. Gary is such an instrumental component to this team. He is a huge "locker room" guy, the kids LOVE him and that pales in comparison to the passion he brings to the table when it comes to the health and safety of the players. Yossi who is a good friend and an up and coming great coach was very helpful to the athletes this weekend. His knowledge of the game and experience helped the kids prepare before game times. Maurice is the perfect team sponsor. Who would have thought 10 years ago, Mo Steel football would be what it is. Mo is the most selfless person I know. He sponsors this team because he believes in the program, especially in the players. I could not do this without any them!

I can't imagine it being easy for those players on Mo Steel who did not get the opportunity to play in this event. As a matter of fact, I am sure it is extremely difficult. That is why I am so proud of Alberto, Elie, Devin, Nathan, Matt, Blake and Brent. Those 7 boys were extremely professional and mature in dealing with it. They were a big part of the success of the team. They helped prepare the guys by playing "scout team" at practice and scouting at the tournament. Thank you guys for understanding and owning your responsibility to the team.

I obviously do not want to wake up from this dream. I want everyone to know that I am overwhelmed with pride that I get to coach these incredible athletes and amazing people. I know that sometimes I am tough and sometimes not the most popular, but I hope that all the players understand that tough love sometimes is what has to happen on the journey to greatness. Hard work pays off in amazing ways and good things happen to good and honorable people. Our team **deserves** to be National Champions because they care so much and work so hard to achieve their goals and dreams. Although my email is VERY long, I am still quite speechless over what I witnessed on Sunday. It was quite simply the greatest day in Mo Steel history, not to mention the greatest day of my career. We are back on the mountain top; enjoy the view guys... we worked very hard to **climb** here. PLAYERS..... WE DID IT!

Please forward this to anyone who might enjoy it, especially the players.