

Why is football special? Why is the game important?

Before answering- you need to forget the money; the fame; the power.

Only a few will find these in football. And truth be told, when these things enter into anything, regardless of how good or well intentioned it is - it loses its heart; it loses its purity.

These things do not make football. These things make football a marketing concept; a good business model; a great way to spend the weekend. And although these things are the reality to the millions of people who watch from the stands or the couch each fall- For those who play or have played the game, these things are not football.

So what makes it special?

What is it about football that makes sixteen and seventeen year old boys into heroes for the hometowns and little brothers?

What is it about football that gives a 40 year old man goose bumps at the smell of fresh cut grass in the fall?

What is it about football that creates an instant connection between former football players, regardless of age or occupation?

What makes it special?

Ask a hundred people and you'll get a hundred answers. Although similar in tone, but each with a different twist, a different story. And you know what? Money, fame, power won't be named. More likely you will find common themes of **TEAM**, **tough**, and **time** ringing through.

What makes it special? You play for a **TEAM**

This is the core of football. The TEAM is what builds the football player. It takes all of them. It requires 11 players, each doing a different job- each doing their job- for a team to be successful. Some get the glory, some get the grit. It takes all of them. The players that play and the players that don't; it takes all of them. Some help to prepare while others play in the game to succeed. Not for the individual, but for the TEAM.

This is football and this is unique. In a culture that shouts "look at me"- a TEAM shouts "look at us!" Football creates people that sacrifice behind the scenes while others get the glory. Football creates people that work together, because the work needs to be done - together. Football creates people that rely on others so that they can be reliable. Football is TEAM.

And the funny thing about football, while you are playing, success is measured in wins and losses but when you are done playing, success is measured in relationships. You will remember a few wins, a few losses, but most of your memories will be of the teammates you won or loss with.

What makes it special? You need to be tough

Because football is tough. Many people want to play; wish they could play, but few are willing to do the work demanded to play. But the work is the journey. It is what gets you to Friday night. It is what

gets you extra games in November. The work makes you worthy to learn the lessons that football can teach.

And that work is tough. But toughness is essential for life. Few choose to learn this fact on their own but everyone will learn it because life will not be easy. You will have to fight. You will have to struggle. Football players choose to learn toughness because they choose to play football. The toughness that is learned in fight and the struggle it requires to play football will be the foundation of the toughness you need to endure through other fights and other struggles, the more important ones that will be found in life.

What makes it special? You play for a time.

Football is a sport governed by time. Not just the time on the scoreboard, but the time in your life that you play it and the fact that you will only play it so long.

For most, football is played right as an adolescent starts to become an adult. Most play while they are learning who they are and getting an idea of who they want to be. This creates the potential that the lessons that they learn playing a game- stick for life. If a young adult will work for an opportunity to play a game, they may become an adult that will work for a career. If a young adult will lead on a football field when things are not going well, they may become one who leads others when challenges arise. If a young adult sacrifices for their teammates, they may become an adult who sacrifices for their family. There are countless adults who say, I am successful because of what I learned playing football.

And you will only play for a short time. Once you're done playing, you're done. The football that you can play after you're done looks nothing like the real thing. More so than any other sport. That finality and the fact that as soon as you start playing, you are marching toward the end makes football special. Most people don't cry why they play their sport for the last time. Football players do. Players that work every day to prove they are tough, cry. Because they know it's over. One day, you wake up in the morning as football player with game to play that night and go to bed as a football player with no game to play-ever.

But that is why football is special. Because that day- that sad day- you have to start to live the lessons you learned while you played. So choose to learn them. NOW.

If you do, you will be special. If you embrace the lessons and honor the game, you will find that living the lessons will come natural. You will find that those lessons are very similar to the fundamentals you did while you played. Learning the fundamentals is tough. But you do them as a team and you do them for a time, and they become natural. They become who you are. You are the fundamentals, you are the lessons, you are because you are a football player.

Embrace your team
Don't be scared of tough
Treasure your time.

It is the difference. Nobody ever regrets giving too much to things that they love.