

One year Notre Dame was scheduled to play on New Year's Day against the University of Florida in the Sugar Bowl. I felt Notre Dame would play very well. I sent our football team home for two days at Christmas to spend time with their families. I've always believed this is important. That year my wife and children and I gathered in Orlando.

We have four children, and they're all girls but two, and I'm very proud of them. I'm never happier than when I'm with my children. We were sitting in a restaurant and the waiter recognized me and came over. He said, "You're Lou Holtz, the coach of Notre Dame, aren't you?"

I said, "Yes, sir," and I took out my pen because I thought he wanted my autograph.

He waved me off and said, "I've got a question, Coach. What's the difference between Notre Dame and Cheerios?"

I said, "Gee, I don't know."

He said, "Cheerios belong in a bowl, and Notre Dame doesn't."

This is a true story. Well, my attitude changed.

PLAY 1: **CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE**

I looked at him and said, "Let me ask you a question. What's the difference between Lou Holtz and a golf pro?"

He shook his head like he didn't know.

I said, "A golf pro gives tips."

The point is I could have let what one individual said put me in a bad mood and ruin an evening with the people I love the most. Or I could make a joke about it and move on.

The talent you have determines what God gave you the ability to do. It's your attitude that determines how well you accomplish things you want to do.

I can't run the 100 in 10.5 seconds. I don't have that talent.

But consider someone who is capable of running it in 10.5. He may not be motivated to run, so he doesn't even go out for track. Or another guy capable of running a 10.5 may come out for track, but he doesn't really push himself and he runs an 11.3. Attitude will determine a lot of things.

A **TEEN'S GAME PLAN FOR LIFE**



PLAY 1: **CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE**

Consider Jerome Bettis. Number 36 for the Pittsburgh Steelers. He played for me at the University of Notre Dame. After Notre Dame he went to the then Los Angeles Rams in the NFL and became the league's rookie of the year.

His second year in the pros Jerome wasn't very good. The third year everybody said he was washed up.

I watched the Rams play on TV, and Jerome didn't play very well. I called him on the phone, and I said, "Jerome, this is Coach Holtz. I watched the Rams play, and there's some guy impersonating you, wearing your jersey and your number, and giving you a bad name. You gotta put a stop to it."

I hung up the phone.

As soon as the season was over Jerome Bettis showed up at my office. He said, "Coach, when I left Notre Dame I had a wonderful attitude. I went to the pros, and I let my attitude go down. I'm coming back to Notre Dame. And I'm going to spend the next four months here getting my attitude right." And that's what he did. He spent the summer at Notre Dame working out and

rededicating himself to being the best football player he could be.

In that off-season Jerome was traded to the Pittsburgh Steelers. He became the famous "Bus," the league leader in rushing and eventually only the fourteenth player to rush for over 10,000 yards in a career. The Steelers did not get the same Jerome Bettis who played the year before with the Rams.

Same talent. Different attitude. Different results.

There was another young man at Notre Dame named Mike Brennan. Mike Brennan was from Baltimore. He walked on to the team without a scholarship. And he was the slowest player I've ever seen in my life, bar none.

If we had run Mike Brennan on a sweep, we would have been called for a delay of game penalty. I mean this guy was slow.

The players nicknamed him "Turtle." I didn't like that. I thought that was very disparaging to the turtle. But that's what the players called him. If you were to come back to Notre Dame today and say, "Hey, who's the 'Turtle'?" everybody would say, "Mike Brennan."

I said this guy would never play for us.

But I underestimated Mike. What he lacked in speed he made up in attitude. Mike Brennan made up his mind that he was going to play. And when we beat Miami 31-30, the number one ranked team at the time, who started for Notre Dame? Mike Brennan. And who played four years in the NFL? That same Mike Brennan.

It's attitude. And a positive attitude is a choice you make.

The problem is, that it's easy to adopt the attitude of losers.

And the only people in this world who are ever going to try to pull you down are those who are down.

The ones who are going to lift you up are the ones who believe in themselves and what they are doing.

When I think of someone who believed in himself, I think of a football player from Troy, Ohio, named Ryan Brewer. Ryan received quite a few honors in high school.

Shortly after being named head coach at South Carolina, I got a personal call from Ryan. He told me that he had been a fan of mine since seventh grade and he wanted to come to South Carolina to play football for me. When I learned that Ryan was named “Mr. Football” in Ohio I told him that we would recruit him. Right over the phone Ryan said, “Then I commit to the University of South Carolina.”

When I found out that Ryan didn’t have any other scholarship offers and realized we hadn’t seen any film of him playing, I started getting a little nervous. But we had given him our word and we certainly would honor it.

Ryan arrived on campus. He was 5’8” and 205 pounds. Like Mike Brennan, he didn’t possess exceptional quickness and speed.

But he also had a marvelous attitude.

His work habits were excellent, and he was an outstanding competitor. He

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immediately earned the respect of his teammates. Ryan lettered for us playing tailback as a freshman even though he didn't do anything outstanding. But keep in mind that nobody on our 1999 football team did.

In the winter after that season Ryan worked so hard and was so positive that we felt we just had to find a place for him on the field. We moved Ryan to wide receiver and he performed very, very well.

Our second season, 2000, was much better. We were invited to play Ohio State in the January 1 Outback Bowl. As we got ready for that game, we had to suspend our starting tailback who had gained almost 1,100 yards. We had no choice but to return Ryan Brewer to tailback.

Ryan's performance was outstanding. He rushed for over 100 yards, caught passes for over 100 yards, and scored three touchdowns. He was the most valuable player in our 24-7 victory, enabling us to finish ranked nineteenth in the country that year after not winning any games the year before.

I ask you, how was this player different from the one whom no one thought deserved a scholarship?

It was Ryan's attitude that made all the difference.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of having a good attitude. When you get up in the morning, the attitude you choose is the most critical thing that you do.