

THSADA NEWSLETTER

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TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

Executive Director's Report *Rusty Dowling, Executive Director – THSADA*

In our most recent newsletter of November 2013, we reported that our THSADA membership had increased close to 400 members. Since that time, we can report that membership has increased close to 500 members. We have seen a significant increase in new membership since we began on November 1, 2013, and notable is the rise of dual position athletic administrators. We remind everyone that the THSADA membership year runs from State Conference to State Conference and that all registration information is on the front page of thsada.com.

The Board of Directors recently concluded their annual meeting in Houston, Texas with some significant legislation taking place. The Board approved a re-configuration of the THSADA Regions by adding three new Regions. Each of the new Regions will elect a Regional Director who will then serve on the THSADA Board of Directors. All information regarding the restructuring of the THSADA was sent out via eNews, through our Regional Directors and posted on the web site. The new Regional Directors will take their seat on the Board of Directors at the annual meeting at the THSCA Coaching Convention in San Antonio this July.

The Board of Directors also approved the protocol for the selection of the Vice President at the General Session

of the THSADA during the Monday morning meeting at the THSCA Coaching Convention. Each Region has the ability to elect a nominee who can run for the office of Vice President once the Nominating Committee makes their final recommendation as to who best fits the profile of leadership for the THSADA. Elections for that position will occur at the General Session with the Vice President taking office at that time. This will also be the time when the President-elect will move to the President's chair and the Vice President will move to the President-elect position. A candidate for the position of Vice President must be an Active member of the THSADA and be willing to serve a four-year commitment through the progression of leadership within the THSADA. All actions by the Board of Directors are posted on the web site.

The THSADA is also placing an emphasis on the involvement of our Association members by having THSADA members participate in the panel discussions at the State Conference. This will allow all of our athletic administrators to be able to share experiences and knowledge with a variety of members throughout the State of Texas regarding a multitude of professional development topics and discussion. The THSADA will also be asking members to actively participate in the work of the various committee's that are aligned with the THSADA.

We would remind all of our members to access the thsada.com web site to find answers to any questions you may have regarding THSADA procedures, forms, committees, board members, by-laws, awards and member resources – where we post available jobs and survey information. The web site is a great resource for all athletic administrators, and we encourage you to take advantage of it and also offer suggestions as to how we can improve it.

The THSADA would remind all members that we will have a presence and involvement at the summer clinics of both the TGCA and the THSCA. Announcements regarding the THSADA schedules will be posted at a later date. Specific to that is the annual PBK Sports – THSADA Hall of Honor Banquet that will be held at the Hyatt Regency in San Antonio on July 20, 2014. This is a premier event of our Association where we recognize our Hall of Honor inductees along with our Retiring AD's, PBK Sports – THSADA Athletic Director of the Year, and our out-going Regional Directors who have just completed their service to the Board of Directors.

In closing, we ask that all members continue their involvement with the Association by serving where needed and facilitating the registration of any new members within your own ISD or Region. ★





TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

President's Remarks *Bill Daws, President – THSADA, Director of Athletics for Clear Creek ISD*

Happy New Year to all of you. I hope your Spring Semester has started out strong and prosperous. We are now into the busiest time of the year and every sport but football and volleyball are in season. I know each of you are working more hours than there are in a week and my hat is off to each of you.

Our Board of Directors had a great meeting a few weeks ago. We made some changes that will directly affect each one of you. Your vote for vice president and region director is more important than ever before because you truly are voting for every board member which in turn runs the Association. Any issue you have will be brought to our board meetings for discussion. All VP nominees will be voted on by each region, and all candidates will be interviewed by our Nominating Committee that decides on who will be on the voting ballot. The vote for VP will come during our AD's meeting at THSCA Coaching School in July. Your presence at that meeting is crucial so you have a say in the leadership of our Association.

Another item that was passed and will come into play this spring is that we will move from a five region system to

an eight region system for the Board of Directors. This will allow more representation across the state and make our Board stronger. We hope this will help out with the regions that have to travel a great distance. We encourage each of you to get involved in some way with the Association. We have a lot of fun and you will have an opportunity to meet a lot of new people. Some of the areas we need help in are the Professional Development, Junior High programs, Publications, and working on committees that help with our State Conference. Please call the THSADA office to find out more about our committees.

Kathy and Rusty have done a wonderful job in promoting our membership with our Association. The members attending our region meetings have increased and I believe the content of our meetings has improved. I know that each region has done things a little different in the past. We are moving to have a state wide agenda that will be covered at our meetings and each one of our region directors will lead those meetings. Rusty will provide the content for each of our meetings which will be sent to our directors to prepare for each agenda. Of course each region

has their own little issues that are unique to them and those issues will be covered as needed. I challenge each of you to try to recruit one new member to our Association.

Our March State Conference is right around the corner and Rusty, Kathy, and Houston AD's have put together a great event. The structure and days are a little different so check the THSADA website to download the agenda and planned events. You can sign up for our conference and membership on-line so come and join us. Encourage any administrator in your district to come join us also. I think they will enjoy the leadership sessions and see exactly what you do on a daily basis. I have a couple of my principals coming.

Thank you for trusting me to be in this position with the THSADA. It is an honor and a great experience to work with each one of you to make this the strongest Association in the nation. The AD's of Texas are some of the best leaders not only in the state but in the nation. We have a tendency to set the pace when it comes to athletic leadership. Good luck this spring and I hope to see you soon at our conference in March. ★

Parents and Playing Time *by Brian Gotta*

We love that our kids play sports for the many life lessons that are learned. But when we intervene and try to influence our son or daughter's coach relative to playing time or positions, what lesson are we really teaching?

Parents want what's best for their children. But far too many parents feel that they must control every aspect of what happens to their kids – and en-

sure its all positive – in order for their children to be happy. And while this may lead to more happiness in the short term, it can have severe, negative long-term consequences.

We all know that life is filled with ups and downs. Everyone reading this article has suffered substantial setbacks at one time or another. And for the most part, when we're adults, there is

no mommy or daddy to swoop in and save the day when we face adversity. We must pick ourselves up and forge ahead on our own. We have to cope. And most of our coping mechanisms were learned as children. Part of our growth process was figuring out that life isn't always fair, and that sometimes things don't go our way. And as painful as those lessons are to learn,

Story continued on page 3...





...Story continued from page 2

they're what develop character in us so that we can handle struggles in our lives.

Where better for our children to learn these lessons, than in sports?

Let's say your son or daughter plays a sport where foot speed is an advantage, and a teammate who is faster is getting more playing time. You and your child have a few options: You could speak to the coach, try to influence him, and maybe even pressure him into playing your child more. Or, maybe your child could work on his speed or try to develop other skills that make him valuable to the team. Or, if that sport isn't the right one for him, maybe he could use this setback as motivation to find a new activity that better suits him.

Because let's fast-forward ten or fifteen years: Imagine now that your child really wants to become an architect but has no talent in drawing. He has a few options: He could work hard to improve his drawing skills. Or maybe he could sharpen other talents to compensate. Or maybe he might just have to give up that dream and find something else to do. But it is unlikely you'll be able to storm into an architectural firm and demand they give your child a job he's not qualified to do.

However, if we've been doing this for our children all their lives, what else would they ever expect?

Our job as parents is not to make sure our children never have any pain or disappointments – quite the contrary. Our job as parents is to prepare them as best we can for the inevitable time that they are on their own, without us to catch them when they fall. By trying to pressure our child's coach into doling out more playing time we are

weakening our children, making life miserable for the coach, and being unfair to other kids whose parents are playing by the rules. And we are teaching our children that if things don't go well for them, it is not their fault, but the fault of someone else. Think about how successful someone will be carrying that attitude with them through life.

Below is a paragraph addressing playing time, from the letter I always send out to parents prior to each season:

Regardless of where your son shakes out in the playing time or lineup mix, it is important that your communication to him be positive. If he hears you talking about what a bad deal he's getting, or something similar, his attitude is going to suffer. And if his attitude suffers, there is nearly no chance that he'll earn more playing time or time at a different position he likes better. Conversely, if he really is deserving of more playing time and I'm just missing it, if he keeps working hard, trying his best and bringing a positive attitude to the field, I'll notice it. I can tell you that if a parent comes to me to complain about position or playing time, then forever after that, if the player does move up or play more, you'll have to wonder if it was something he earned himself, or if it was something that came as a result of your complaint. On the other hand, if everyone takes the attitude that "the cream will rise to the top," and is patient, then you'll know that everything your son gets is deserved. (The latter feels much better). Everyone will have their chances to show what they can do in the game. It is important that they are prepared for those opportunities, and make the most of them.

And what if your child really is getting a raw deal? What if you know his plight is clearly based on favoritism or politics?

First of all, unless you've been at every practice – not just the games, you don't know. Children don't see it objectively, so you can't just take their word for it. Or maybe you can. I have a son playing Pop Warner and he began the season as the starting running back. For the past two games, he's been replaced by the coach's son. And don't get me wrong, the coach's son is good, but I haven't seen anything in the games that he did to supplant my boy. And I was angry about it. Then I asked my son, "So what happened to make Johnny the starter over you?" And my son said, "Probably that I had a terrible week at practice and messed up my assignment on a couple plays and fumbled." Oh. OK.

And finally, if you're sure after really waiting for things to change, after observing practices and getting an "honest" assessment from your child, you still feel like it's not going the way it should be, what should you do? Nothing.

That's right, YOU, should do nothing. But it would be very appropriate for your child to approach the coach and tell him he feels he could be helping the team more and ask what he can do to improve his playing time or position. The coach will respect that much more, and your child's self-esteem and communication skills will get a big boost. And, unless we plan on spending the rest of our days clearing the path of any obstacles for our children, isn't them standing up for themselves exactly what they're going to have to do all their lives anyway?

Brian Gotta is a former professional youth baseball coach and current volunteer Little League coach and board member. He is the President of CoachDeck and also author of four youth sports novels. ★





When a Coach is Legally a Bully *By Amanda Bigbee, Keller ISD General Counsel*

Your child is playing football tonight against a team that is ranked number one in the District. You knew it would be tough, but at the end of the evening, the numbers on the scoreboard are 91-0 and your child's team is on the losing end. The winning coach put in his second string, but they continued to pass, run and score. Players ran out of bounds so the clock was stopped. Their kicker kicked extra points. Their quarterback never took a knee. You are stunned and your child, although physically unhurt, is too humiliated to study for his Math test the next day. At home that evening, you file a bullying complaint against the opposing coach on your school district's website. Was your child bullied? Is playing your hardest when it means demolishing an opponent against the law?

Texas Education Code section 37.0832, which defines bullying for us, read as follows:

(a) ..."bullying" means, subject to Subsection (b), engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that occurs on school property, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, or in a vehicle operated by the district and that:

- (1) has the effect or will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or of damage to the student's property; or
- (2) is sufficiently severe, persistent, and pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student.

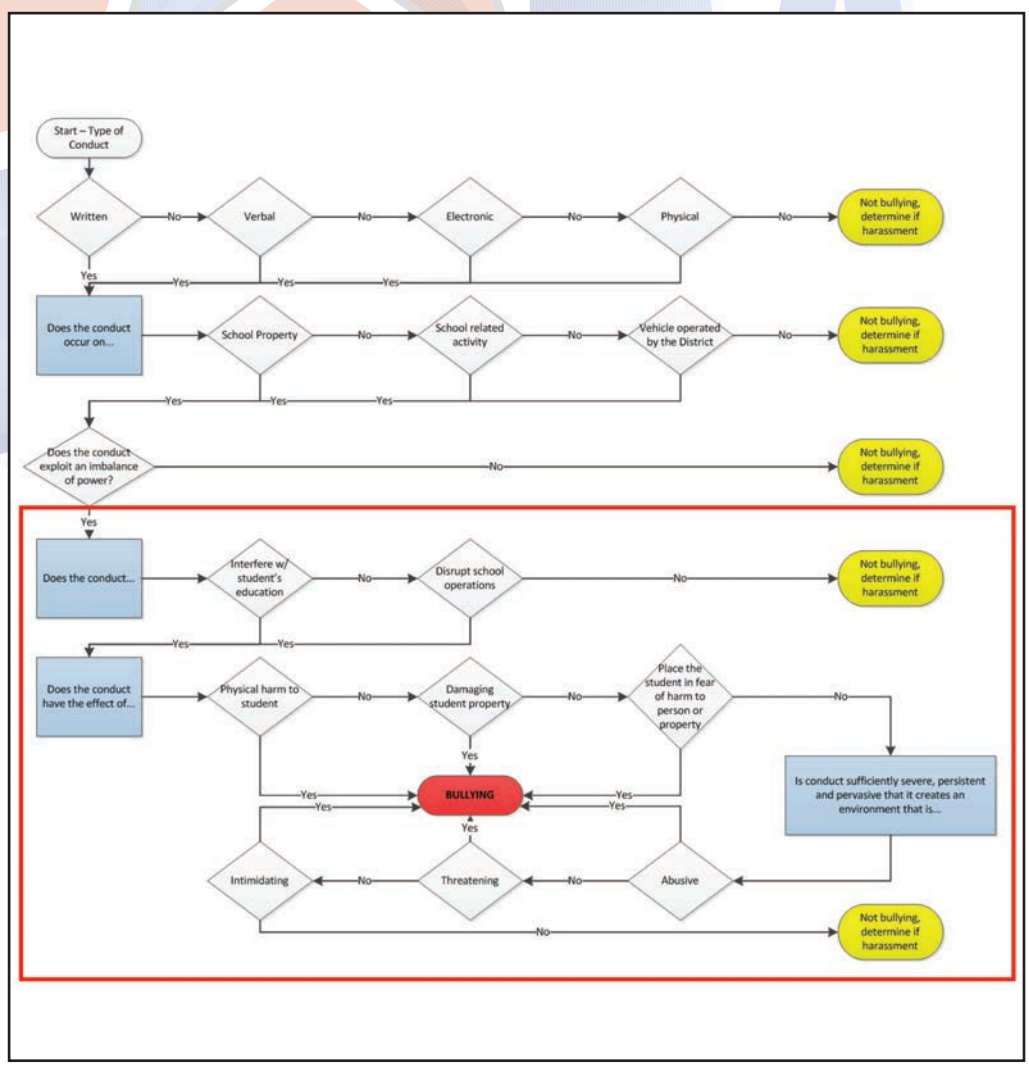
(b) Conduct described by Subsection (a) is considered bullying if that conducts:

- (1) exploits an imbalance of power between the student perpetrator and the student victim through written or verbal expression or physical conduct; and
- (2) interferes with a student's education or substantially disrupts the operation of a school...

So what does all that mean in our daily lives and on the football field? To determine if the coach's actions equate to bullying, follow this somewhat complex flow chart:

The term "bullying" in the sports arena is becoming almost common. Heightened media attention on dominant performances by a certain exceptional football team in DFW area as well as the situation with the Miami Dolphins rookie who may have been bullied by a veteran on the team have brought a spotlight to the issue of bullying in athletics. It is important, in Texas schools, to not jump to conclusions about what is or is not bullying and, instead, conduct the analysis outlined above.

In case described at the beginning of this article, the coach's behavior was nonverbal and took place at a school



Story continued on page 5...





...Story continued from page 4

related activity. There is likely an imbalance of power any time an adult's behavior impacts a student. Did the behavior interfere with the student's education or disrupt school operations? Under the facts given, it's possible to make a case that the student's education was impacted because the student could not focus on his school work. For the sake of argument, let's say "yes" and move forward with the analysis. Did the conduct have the effect of physically harming the student, damaging the student's property, or placing the student in fear of harm to himself or his property? I don't think you can, in good faith, say that it did. The student is upset about losing badly, but he's not fearful that he will be hurt. As the answer is no, you must move to one additional question: Is the conduct sufficiently severe, persistent, and pervasive that it creates an environment that is intimidating, abusive, or threatening? In the scenario presented, all of the contact between the coach and the player happened in one game. The behavior cannot be persistent or pervasive within that limited time frame, and while the game itself may have been intimidating, the environment of the student's school hasn't been altered in some way to be intimidating, abusive, or threatening. At the end of the day, the facts presented do not meet the legal definition of bullying.

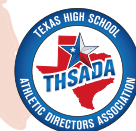
Let's run through the analysis with a different set of facts. Freshman basketball player has a lot of potential, but she's undisciplined and not applying herself sufficiently to live up to the potential she has. Her coach is frustrated with her and snaps at her during practices routinely. During drills the coach will pair up with the freshman and try to push her to execute better. A couple of times the coach has thrown a pass

to freshman a little harder than was necessary and the student has yelped an "ouch" or a "that hurt," but she continues practicing, albeit with a scowl on her face. Coach is acting what he knows to be in her best interest – this athlete can be great if she will just focus and apply herself. During one game our freshman player misses a layup and the coach pulls her out. He yells at her, loud enough for the fans to hear, for no more than 30 seconds as she takes her seat at the end of the bench. After the game the coach grabs the player's arm on her way to the dressing room and turns her around before pushing her against a wall. He tells her she has got to focus if she ever wants to amount to anything and that he's disappointed in her. The next morning the athlete's mother shows up at the principal's office with pictures of a bruised arm, claims that the daughter wants to withdraw from basketball because she's scared to come back, and alleges that the coach has consistently bullied her daughter.

Let's run through the flow chart together on this scenario – The behavior is both verbal and physical and took place at school or school related activities. There is an imbalance of power between a coach and athlete. I have placed a big red box around the rest of the flow chart above. I don't think a coach's interaction with an athlete will ever not meet the criteria of the steps outside of the box – in other words, you can take short cut and just do the analysis in the red box. Your behavior will always be physical, verbal, or nonverbal; it will always be within the school setting; and because of your position, there will always be an imbalance of power. For this reason, the real questions that matter come next.

In our freshman basketball hypothetical, the behavior, in my opinion, does interfere with the student's education, as the student is now fearful of the coach and will not return to basketball. Moving on through the flow chart, we ask ourselves if the student has been physically harmed, there is property damage, or there is fear of harm or damage. In this case, there is bruising as well as an expressed fear of physical harm. By the legal definition, the coach has bullied his player.

There is a fine line, but a definitive line, between pushing athletes to do their best and bullying them. That line cannot be passed. Any time your interactions with a student turn physical, you are in a danger zone. A supportive pat on the shoulder as they come back to the bench is fine, but a slam into a wall or a hard smack to the helmet in anger is too far. Even if there is no physical action, the words alone can constitute bullying if they rise to the level of causing harm or fear in the child. Adults often forget the impact the imbalance of power has when interacting with a student. Under the legal definition, intimidation and threats can quickly rise to the level of bullying, so it's important to be aware of your tone, words, and behavior as you interact with students. ★



**From the THSADA...
Recommended Reading
for Athletic Directors:**

"A New Breed of Leader"
by Sheila Murray Bethel

"Built From Scratch"
by Bernie Marcus and Arthur Blank



Athletes Bring Heart to New Friendships

By Makenzie Parker, Brandeis High School – "Brandeis Blueprint" Editor-in-Chief



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Ness Aguilar has a full schedule of football practice, changing back into his school clothes, and deciding what to do for lunch. He could go off campus with a couple of his football buddies or hang out in the locker room; instead, he takes his sack lunch and sits down next to Krishna Tekmal, a student in the special education program in the school.

"Everybody deserves to be treated right and have a good friend no matter who they are," Aguilar said. Many athletes like Aguilar spend their lunch time sitting with the students playing games, joking around and doing what teenagers do. "All of our kids enjoy when the athletes come to hang out. It is the highlight of their day," special education teacher Taylor Hutchins said.

The athletes don't stop there. Outside of the cafeteria the athletes walk the hallways with them, hang out with them at sporting events, and even are invited to some of the students' birthday parties outside of school. "Jada enjoys seeing the football players at

lunch; she does not see it as though they are helping her, she sees the guys truly as her friends," Sherri Cherry, mother of student Jada Cherry, said. She enjoys it so much she invited some of the football team to her birthday party, and to my surprise several, of the boys RSVP'd and showed up and that made her day."

both groups of students in making memories and friends. "I enjoy seeing them because they do not judge a soul based on how you look or how you sound," senior Chase Guillory said. "Truly, they're amazing and have personalities unique to each one. I'm not perfect and I sometimes may judge others, but I feel I can take something away from how the kids carry out their interactions with others. Seeing them really does lift me up on difficult days and teaches me humility. I really don't know how else to describe my feelings about them, but they're amazing individuals." ★

Senior Corey Hayes and Karley Crowder Play Catch



Athletes Enjoy Lunch with Younger Students they Met in Friends Having Fun



The social interactions help the student's learn how to interact in ways they are unable to in their classroom.

Their friendships and time hanging out together however didn't just start in high school. Many of the athletes that come to hang out with them, such as football, volleyball, and softball players have known these students since middle school and were able to continue hanging out with them in the school's Friends Having Fun Club. "Given the opportunity of Friends Having Fun, they got closer and, since they're familiar with each other, it made it more of a natural thing to see each other at lunch and just sit down with them," special education teacher Vanessa Vallejo said. "These athletes give our students the ability to generalize the skills they learn in class in a less structured setting," Hutchins said. "In most social situations, what comes naturally to a typical student does not come naturally to our students. The ability to practice these skills in a natural setting is very beneficial to our students' success after high school."

The benefits of those activities affect

Photos by M. Parker



Getting to Know: **Mike Jackson** Athletic Director / Head Football Coach – La Marque ISD



How long have you been at La Marque and what is your background?

I have been at LM for 3 years in April, reporting for work here on April 18, 2011. I am in my 23rd year of education, 21 of those spent as an AD / Head Football Coach and two years as a Principal. 149-84-4 in 21 years; Two state championships; taken four different schools to the 4th round and five different schools to the playoffs. I have been the athletic director/coordinator for State titles in boy's & girl's basketball, softball, baseball, state and regional qualifiers in golf, tennis, power lifting, soccer, volleyball and swimming.

What is your biggest challenge juggling the role of Head Football Coach and AD?

The biggest challenge is allotting the time to supply to the football program, either in-season or offseason, and also supporting the head coaches to help them achieve success in their sports. I try and accomplish this by trusting my coordinators and delegating responsibilities to try and build leadership and a united vision throughout the overall athletic department.

What challenges do you think 1A, 2A and 3A athletic directors have that may be unique when compared to athletic directors at larger school districts?

In smaller schools the coaches are wearing so many more hats and filling various roles. Most of our coaches are involved in football and then working with not only a second but in many cases a third sport. Additionally, many of them are working with both high school and middle school kids in various sports. Supporting those coaches and making sure the kids and programs are getting proper attention from coaches filling so many needs is a tremendous challenge.

What is your greatest concern in regards to athletics in general in the state of Texas?

My biggest concern for the future is the idea that athletics seems to be treated more and more like they are a frivolous activity, particularly by administrators who never participated in competitive athletics and do not seem to understand the value of it. In my opinion it appears that we're heading towards the society where "everyone gets a medal for trying", which in my opinion is weakening the resolve and work ethic of our future generation.

What advice would you give a young coach who wants to be an athletic director?

For any person that aspires to be in this role I would suggest to have a clear vision of what you want to accomplish. Have a genuine care and understanding for children. I have a heartfelt goal to be an organized and effective organization, which drives me to continue to strive to have the most organized athletic department possible. I would suggest reading and studying great leaders and effectively run organizations to gather ideas to how to always improve your program and the product it is producing.

How do you measure success of your athletic programs?

I measure the success of our programs by what we are producing. When a child enters our program as a freshman and exits four years later, have we made an impact on their work ethic, social skills, behavior, outlook on life, attitude, physical ability, etc? The reason that athletics is a part of the curriculum in Texas is to educate and develop students in ways that classroom subjects cannot. Are we producing great fathers, mothers, members of society, college students, workers, etc?

Mike Jackson's Bio:

Coach Jackson has completed 21 years as an Athletic Director/Head Football Coach and his third at La Marque. During this time he has compiled a record of 149-84-4. This includes two State Championships and 17 playoff appearances. He is 30-9 in his three seasons as the Head Cougar, including a district record of 14-1. He has led five different schools to the playoffs and four different schools to the 4th round. Coach Jackson has been named Coach of the Year 15 times and has served as the Head Coach of both the Bayou Bowl (2012) and Space City (2010) All-Star games. He is a Past-President for the Greater Houston Football Coaches Association (2011-2012) and has had 12 assistants move on take Head Football Positions during his career. He has his B.A. from St. Edward's University in Physical Education/History (1990), an M.A. from Southwest Texas State in Athletic Administration (1991), an M.Ed. in Educational Administration from the University of Houston-Victoria (1994), and his Ph.D. in Leadership Studies from California Coast University (2001). Coach Jackson is a Certified Athletic Administrator (CAA) through the National Interscholastic Administrators Association and has spoken at numerous clinics regarding offensive football and program development, including the Glazier, Greyhound, GHFCA & Gridiron Heroes Clinics. He has been published several times in coaching periodicals, including 5 times in Texas Coach Magazine. He is married to Tracey Jackson and has two children Mariah (7) and Jericho (2).

