

Standards, Discipline, Decision Making, Resiliency

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During my 25 years of service, I have followed the Air Force Academy football program with a keen eye. Although, not a perennial national power, they are an elite college football program that has developed 77 All-Americans, including Academic All-Americans. Granted they don't have a team full of five and four star recruits like Alabama Crimson Tide or the Florida State Seminoles, but they have represented the Air Force very well on the national stage. Additionally, our Falcons have been to a bowl game the last five years. I believe Coach Troy Calhoun, just like many successful leaders of elite college football programs share a similar philosophy. Teams like the Air Force Academy, first, recruit and develop personnel which are talented, disciplined, outstanding decision makers who have performed well in the face of adversity. Second, they build a support system that facilitates personnel and professional growth. Third, they hire excellent position coaches who also relate well to the elite high school football players and their families. Fourth, they recruit high character individuals and when a player displays character flaws or does not follow team rules they are disciplined. Repeat violators are dismissed from the program. Hopefully some of this sounds familiar.

THE BEDROCK OF EXCELLENCE



Photo by: Tech. Sgt. Raymond Hoy



Photo by: John Van Winkle



Photo by: Rachel Boettcher



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Photo by: Mike Kaplan



I think it is safe to say these elite coaches are not only concerned about results, but I have heard them say on numerous occasions that the process is just as important as the result. In the case of college football, practice and preparation is just as important as game day.

Elite football programs and high performance organizations within our Air Force share some commonalities. High performance organizations adhere to standards and set high expectations. They follow Department of Defense Instructions, Air Force Instructions, Operational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards and technical order data. High performance organizations are disciplined. Airmen follow the rules all the time and the organization's climate and culture incentivizes

performing tasks the right way and negatively reinforces those members who don't. High performance organizations are learning environments. They replicate and war-game complex actions and practice before executing in real time. High performance organizations mitigate risk by routinely identifying the hazard, assessing the risk, analyze risk control measures, make controlled decisions, implement risk controls, and supervise and review the actions. High performance organizations consistently challenge the decision making of their members. These organizations have a robust after-action review process. They have a vibrant and challenging certification program and consistently promote a high ethical environment. High performance

organizations are resilient. No organization has the stars align every day. Some days, activities go according to plan while other days take a little ingenuity. It is this organizational elasticity that determines whether an organization can sustain superior performance.

Coaches don't play the game, players do. Each one of us is counted on to play our role—to achieve excellence. We are counted on to make the plays necessary to win the game. Make no mistake about it, in order to make plays you must leverage the process and support structure to prepare. You see it is not about the result, but how you arrived at the result. If the process is sound the result will take care of itself. If the process is not sound you may get lucky, but luck will only last so long. We know we must

follow tech data and/or Air Force Instructions, but why don't we ... trust maybe or we may feel pressured to produce the widget right now or the mission will fail? Well, have we ever thought the mission will fail if we don't do the task correctly? I had a mentor tell me, "What is the use of doing an activity fast if we have to go back and correct the mistakes." We know what the standards are. Can you imagine an Air Force where everyone follows the standard ... everyone follows rules? I can. I do my part to ensure my teammates will also. I am doing my part to develop resilient Airmen who persevere. Airmen who are balanced both emotionally and spiritually ... Airmen who are physically fit and who understand the value of social relationships. I am doing my part to ensure my teammates are disciplined and eliminate mental mistakes. I can tolerate physical mistakes, but knowing the rules and not following them just eats at my core. How can we sit back and not do anything when safety and standards are compromised? Remember our core values of *Integrity First, Service before Self and Excellence in All We Do.*

Make no mistake, we are a great fighting force ... this is the best Air Force the world has ever seen, but we can be better. We are maybe a block away from breaking the game wide open. As Tony Dungy stated, "Do the routine things better than anyone else."

Developing Airmen and managing organizations is a process. The team that blocks and tackles the best will win.

Good luck to our Air Force Fighting Falcons! 🦅



Photo by: John Van Winkle