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on staying powerSM



Joe Paterno has compiled one of the best records in college football while emphasizing academic excellence. In 20 years as Penn State's head coach, he has never had a losing season and has competed in 17 postseason bowl games. His teams have been ranked first in the country in four of the last eight years.

Equally important to Paterno is the classroom performance of his student athletes. Eighteen of his players have been named first team academic all-Americans and twelve have received NCAA postgraduate scholarships, ranking Penn State in the top five teams nationally according to a recent NCAA report.

Having a bad start was probably the best thing that ever happened to me. We went 5 and 5 my first year, then lost the opener the following year. Everybody was placing bets on who would succeed me.

Had we been moderately successful, I never would have questioned the way I was coaching. Now I constantly question everything I do.

Success is a journey

I never get very elated over a win, because, as Churchill said, "Success is

never final." Likewise, I never get depressed over a loss. I look for the lesson in it.

If you're knocked down, you can't lose your guts. You need to play with supreme confidence or else you'll lose again, and then losing becomes a habit.

You must always do what you're afraid to do

People aren't just lucky. Good things happen to them because they're willing to take chances. I don't ever want to think about ties.

If you don't win, you don't win, but at least you have the experience of going for it, of making something useful happen through your efforts.

You either get better or you get worse

You can never stay the same. All of us are changing every day. Everything we read or see or do makes us different in some small way.

If you think you can come off a practice field the same player you were when you went on, you're kidding yourself. If you practice well, you'll be better.

Some players think that when Saturday comes, they can get by on natural ability, that practice isn't important. That's foolish. In our

league, everyone is good. If you want to be #1, you better get yourself ready. That's also why I emphasize academics so much. Preparing for a game is like preparing for life.

The will to win is important, but the will to prepare is vital

You have to perform at a consistently higher level than others. That's the mark of a true professional. Professionalism has nothing to do with getting paid for your services.

We only promise a fair shake

One of the things we look for in players is honesty. If you accept people who are only interested in a flashy car and handouts from alumni, they won't have much staying power. To be consistently good takes commitment to the good of the group.

Coaches have to be honest, too. Too many make promises they can't keep just to sign a kid. When he shows up on campus, he discovers he has to make the team just like everyone else. Then he gets disillusioned and morale is lowered.

It's easy for first-stringers to have good morale. But what about the guys who almost never get to play? If they have good morale, then every-

one has it. And the only way everyone will have it is if everyone believes he has had a fair shake.

To win you must play as though you can't lose

We've had five undefeated regular seasons and three all the way. To have a 10 and 1 or 9 and 2 season isn't exactly what our fans hope for today.

The secret to performing well under that kind of pressure is poise. To develop poise, you need to constantly subject yourself to more stress than you'll find in games. Then when you find yourself in a difficult situation, you react confidently.

Our players work so hard in practice, Saturdays seem easy by comparison. We go out to have fun and it shows on the scoreboard.

In that sense, I feel my greatest accomplishment has been to keep football in its proper perspective.

You don't know what you have until you have to use it

Football is only a tiny part of a kid's total emotional, physical, and intellectual development. All I ask is that they give it their best. If we win, great. If we lose, there's always next Saturday.

If we can't get knocked on our rear end once in a while and come back and be better, I'm going to be awfully disappointed. You don't know what you have until you have to use it.