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WRITING SAMPLES

Books

"The Book of Bowden," by Jim and Julie Bettinger **Foreword by Burt Reynolds**

"Somehow, I went from being too young to being too old. Somewhere in there I must have been just right."

- FSU Head Coach Bobby Bowden

"Some people think it's a weakness to be behind. Folks, it's not a weakness to be behind – not if you can come back and win it. One of the greatest teaching experiences you will learn in life is to be behind and then come back to win. And until that happens to you, you don't know what kind of a team you got."

- FSU Head Coach Bobby Bowden

"I've always thought that when something bad happens to me, something good is fixin' to follow."

- FSU Head Coach Bobby Bowden

"I'm not too proud to change. I like to win too much."

- FSU Head Coach Bobby Bowden

"I learned a long time ago that you don't have to go around using bad language and fighting and trying to hurt people to show others how macho you are. That stuff won't get you anywhere. It just shows lack of vocabulary and character."

- FSU Head Coach Bobby Bowden

"I basically listened to a play-by-play of World War II for a year. I would imagine what every place looked like: what the terrain of the battlefield was like, what the army units looked like, and how the sounds and smells of the war must have been. I had a pretty good map in my head of where things were in Europe and I even began to learn which generals were leading which units."

- FSU Head Coach Bobby Bowden, describing his activities when bedridden with rheumatic fever as a teenager

"The similarities between leading troops into battle and coaching a team are well documented. You face similar tasks of motivation, preparation, teamwork, discipline."

- FSU Head Coach Bobby Bowden

"I still believe that winning is the greatest feeling there is in coaching, but I probably get the most satisfaction out of putting in the strategies and watching them play out."

- FSU Head Coach Bobby Bowden

"So let's start with hair. I'm not going to ask you to look like Kojaks, but we are going to keep it neat and we are going to look like football players."

"We're also gonna go to class and get up for breakfast. And there's not gonna be any room on this team for individuals who've got to smoke and drink. If you do then you're gonna be gone."

"Next, we're gonna ask that you attend church regularly and write your mom and dad. It'll mean a lot to them and more to you over the years."

- FSU Head Coach Bobby Bowden, first speech to the first FSU team

"We always pray before a game. I never pray for victory; I just pray that they do their best and ask God to take care of our players. God isn't going to win a football game for you; He's got much bigger things on his mind."

- FSU Head Coach Bobby Bowden

"You've got to be careful about that saint stuff. They put that halo over your head, and pretty soon it slips down a few inches and becomes a noose."

- FSU Head Coach Bobby Bowden

Preface

If you're lucky enough to find yourself in the presence of Bobby Bowden, be prepared for a lighthearted story or two and a God-centered message, with a bit of wisdom and some football strategy thrown in.

Coach Bowden has managed to win the hearts and minds of millions through his work on and off the football field.

The year 2000 marked Bobby Bowden's silver anniversary season as head football coach at Florida State University. Beginning a quarter-century earlier, Bowden resurrected a program that had won only four games in the three seasons prior to his arrival, and he transformed it into one worthy of national acclaim. His Seminoles emerged as a perennial national powerhouse in the eighties and finally won for Bowden his first national title in 1993.

Bowden has logged more than three hundred career victories and ended the 2000 season as the second-winningest active coach in major college football. His Florida State teams once played fourteen consecutive bowl games without a loss, a span that included ten consecutive victories, something no other program has ever accomplished. Bowden also is the only coach in the history of college football to have led teams to ten or more victories for thirteen straight seasons and to have had teams finish ranked fourth or higher in the final Associated Press poll for thirteen consecutive seasons.

What's his secret formula? He'll tell you a big part of it is faith and prayer. At a time when it's not only politically incorrect, but outlawed in many public places, Bowden leads his team in prayer before and after football games. A Bowden signature is his willingness and ability to shape players for life beyond the football field by teaching them life-coping skills and values.

Robert Cleckler Bowden was born November 8, 1929, in Birmingham, Alabama. His passion for the game of football took root early. It started on the roof of his childhood home in Birmingham. From that perch, he and his father could look down on the local high school's practice field.

Bowden's second childhood home offered much the same opportunity, as it overlooked a college football field.

Bowden's own football career looked like it was going to be cut short by a childhood illness. In 1943, a then thirteen-year-old Bowden was bedridden while suffering from rheumatic fever. An outstanding athlete, he was suddenly subjected to a frustrating eighteen months of confinement to recuperate following a lengthy hospital stay. No matter, Bowden's father continued to fuel the boy's enthusiasm for football, and one day he brought home a football strategy board game that young Bobby played with time after time, sometimes using it to play out football games he listened to on the radio.

Bowden recovered and went on to become an outstanding football player at Woodlawn High School, then fulfilled his lifelong dream to play for the Crimson Tide. But his coveted role as a freshman quarterback at Alabama couldn't calm the rising tide of homesickness for his high school sweetheart, Ann Estock. After his first semester, he returned to Birmingham and the two youngsters married (she was sixteen and he was nineteen). Bowden transferred to Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham, where, at five-foot-seven and 165 pounds, he earned Little All-America quarterback honors in 1952.

Bowden received a graduate degree from Peabody College, then went on to fulfill his professional aspirations – as a football coach.

Prior to his now-legendary accomplishments at Florida State University, Bowden achieved great success in his previous coaching stops as well, putting together a 31-6 record in four seasons at Samford University (1959-1962) before moving on to forge a 42-26 mark in six years at West Virginia (1970-1975).

The father of six children and grandfather of twenty-one (at last count), Bowden has seen three of his four sons follow their dad into coaching. As of 2000, Tommy was the head coach at Clemson; Terry, who had coached at Auburn, was an ABC television sports analyst; and Jeff – Bobby's youngest son – was in his seventh season at Florida State, as a receivers coach. Oldest son, Steve, is in private business in Birmingham. Daughter Robyn Bowden Hines, eldest of the siblings, has been a school teacher, and Ginger Bowden Madden, the youngest child in the family, is a state's attorney in Florida.

While compiling the quotes for this book, we reviewed numerous videotapes of Coach Bowden on and off the field. We couldn't help but recognize the zeal he has for the game of football. His intense involvement reminded us of another man – in Coach Bowden's words, FSU football's "first hero," Buddy Strauss. Buddy is my (Julie's) dad, who played football at Florida State in the late 1940s and now belongs to the FSU Hall of Fame.

For every quote we've put into The Book of Bowden, there are probably a half dozen that were left out. These come from a variety of sources – his speeches, church visits, sideline comments, press conferences, and those etched in the minds of players from those times when Bowden spoke at a critical moment in their lives. We can only hope that this work will be an inspiration to others as well as a scrapbook of sorts for anyone who cherishes one of college football's most popular and engaging legends.

- Jim and Julie Bettinger

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