



A Complete Football Guide:

A Blueprint for Success for Coaches, Players and Parents

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**AMERICAN
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M O N T H L Y

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In the pages of this East Mecklenburg High School Football Players Manual you will find what the football staff at East Mecklenburg High School expects from you individually and will hopefully serve as a roadmap for success at East Mecklenburg High School. The direction of our football team will be spelled out in the pages and sections that follow. Every aspect of school and football will be discussed which will make you a better student, player, and citizen of the East community. Hopefully, as we cover each chapter of the guide together, you will grow as an individual so that we can grow as a team and maximize the potential that we possess.

As we survey a different topic each week, **you are expected to read each section ahead of time and be able to discuss each topic fully.** At the end of each topic you will be given a short quiz which will measure where we are and the work that we all need to do in order to improve our situation. **Our goal is to become a more athletic football team that is comprised of hard working students that know exactly what is expected of them and will rise to and above those expectations together.**

Over the next sixteen weeks we will cover every aspect of our program from weight room importance to game day behavior. We will talk about academics along with behavior expectations that will be more clearly defined for all to adhere to. Other topics will include developing positive character traits and leadership qualities, and we will excel in this area. We will explore the recruiting process along with the ideas that center around the team and we will explore goal-setting in the long- and short-term and hopefully learn to communicate with each other in a more positive and effective manner. Many other topics will be covered.

This guide will serve as a reference point that you can review to keep us on track throughout the off season, the summer, pre-season, the season, and the post-season. It is important that you use this guide as a blueprint much as a builder would use his plan to bring a great design into fruition. Without a strong, well-developed plan it would be difficult to construct a great house in a haphazard, disorganized manner. Everyone would be pulling in a different direction with no coordination. Even though the goal would be to build a house, it would take all, in a coordinated effort, to build the best house possible, one that would stand the test of time and be aesthetically pleasing to all. In short, we should be a house filled with quality, built and on display with pride. The builder has a plan and everyone involved must agree to follow the plan without deviation to reach the ultimate goal most efficiently and to maximize the potential of all involved. There can only be one “builder” who organizes the efforts of all to move in the house on time. The coaching staff is the “builder,” using the unique talents of the crew to provide a great finished product that meets all goals and objectives. You are the “crew” with outstanding talents and this is YOUR plan. Use the plan and knowledge you gain as your tools and components to build the best house possible, a house that we will all be proud to be part of.

Hopefully, we can grow to be a great football team and you can become a more productive part of that team. Follow this plan and this program and you will grow as an individual and mature

into a dedicated, thriving part of the world outside of football and home in order to contribute to the bigger picture of success in life. Enjoy, participate, learn, and do what is expected of you and prepare each week by studying the plan. A wise man once said, “In order to be successful, you must Plan Your Work and Work Your Plan.”

ACADEMICS

We have several phenomenal student athletes in the East Mecklenburg High School family. We have others that struggle and do not achieve at a regularly high level in the classroom. There are many integral parts that go into achieving at your highest level in the classroom. Imagine going to plan in a baseball game without ever taking a round of infield, throwing, or taking batting practice. Imagine going to Butler or Independence to play for a Conference Championship (if you believe it, you can achieve it), and the team did not practice for that week. We didn't work on timing or plays or the opponent's offensive and defensive tendencies. We weren't in physical or mental condition to play an important game. Imagine a conference track meet at Butler against all of the finest athletes in the area. The East team arrives late and hasn't worked on transferring the stick in the relay. Picture yourself starring in the school play that opens tonight and not knowing your lines. There are no props and there is no sort of set. I am sure you are thinking, “These are extreme examples and have been exaggerated to make a point,” but while that is true, it is also true that you would not allow yourself to enter any of these situations without being properly prepared. The same should be true of your performance in the classroom.

Many students do not prepare for class. They do not review notes and assignments. They do not complete assignments thoroughly or they simply go through the motions, do the task without really learning the material. They do not study and prepare for tests properly and have no game plan for how to really succeed. Many think they can turn “the little engine that could” on at the last minute and succeed, but as you can see, this prepares you for failure more than for success.

In preparing for an athletic event, you prepare in a methodical way, bit by bit, with desire and concentration. You know what the desired result is and have a plan on how to reach your goal. You are willing to work extra hard to master the concepts that you may be unsure of. You become mentally and physically prepared, break down the work into small parts, put the small parts together into concepts, then perform on a highly motivated level because you are prepared for success. You must also do this in the classroom in order to prepare at a high level. Think about it, you should apply the work ethic you have learned in athletics in the classroom as well. If properly prepared and motivated, this should be easy.

Ask yourself, “How can I prepare for the success that I am capable of in the classroom?” The following are strategies that you are **expected to use to create your own personal game plan for academic success**. During the season, you have school, practice, games, family, church obligations, and your leisure time. It can be frustrating and tempting to try everything. If you do this, you will become a Jack of All Trades and A Master of None. In other words, you do all in an incomplete matter and do not thrive in any. It's like a restaurant that has a huge menu. They have steaks, burgers, seafood, and tons of other items, but although they have it all, it may not be the best. In order to become very successful and have the best-tasting eats in town, the manager of that restaurant must prioritize and manage.

Setting Priorities:

In order to become successful in class, sports and personal life, it is important to prioritize what is important to you and concentrate on the items at the top of the list with a majority of time and effort. Things at the top of your list must be your TOP PRIORITIES. Things toward the bottom of your list will be given less time and will be gotten to when you are satisfied that you have provided a sufficient effort to the top. What are my priorities? What are the things that are important to? Examples would be family, religion, school, sports, clubs, friends, community service, etc. We hear all the time about “Getting Your Priorities Straight? To set priorities you have to really engage and think about this. It will be the foundation of your time management strategy and both your short-term and long term goal setting strategy. In order to be honest to yourself you must really decide to I put my family before sports? Have I taken care of my obligations with school work before I go out with my friends or will I do my homework when I get home? Prioritizing will force you to choose what you value and to what extent.

You are expected to use the template below to list your priorities from most important to least important. Take time and careful consideration when deciding on the order.

My Priorities:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

List things that are important to you and things you are willing to concentrate on in order to excel. Priorities should be reevaluated as often as things of importance become less important and those which had low importance become increasingly urgent. After you have carefully examined your priorities, you must realize there are only so many hours in a day. After prioritizing your life, you will need some type of effective time management system that will

allow you to maximize what time you have and how to direct your allotted time in the most efficient, productive way. This brings us to Point 2, Time Management.

Time Management:

Coaches develop an organized practice plan each day in order to succeed in the proper planning for competition. It should be carefully thought out and adhered to in order to get the most bang for the buck. A diary or log of time spent in a regular day is a way to first examine wasted time in order to eliminate unproductive time that is not applied to priority items.

Below is a sample log that you are expected to keep for five days. Write down your actual activities and account for every minute of your day.

Time	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
6:00 AM					
7:00 AM					
8:00 AM					
9:00 AM					
10:00 AM					
11:00 AM					
12:00 PM					
1:00 PM					
2:00 PM					
3:00 PM					
4:00 PM					
5:00 PM					
6:00 PM					
7:00 PM					
8:00 PM					
9:00 PM					
10:00 PM					
11:00 PM					

After you complete your log with actual activities, see where you can eliminate wasted time by scheduling 5 days, and sticking to it. Use your priority list to dedicate time to those items. Remember to schedule some leisure time for important leisure activities. **You are expected to schedule your time according to priorities.** Assuming that academics are near the top of your list, you may ask, “What types of activities will help me the most on the allotted time?”

Best Academic Practices:

- Individual Study Time: carefully schedule time each day for academics and adhere to the schedule whether or not you actually have homework or papers to write. You should try to schedule a consistent time each day. Study time should be set aside on the weekends also. The place of study is important. Choose a place that is quiet and away from distraction that includes TV, Phone, MP Players etc. The area should be well lit, organized, and big enough to spread out work. A desk or table is best in an upright position. Lying in bed is not the best study environment. Have all study materials available before you begin. If the time is scheduled and the study environment is right... then what.
- During the Individual study time you should complete homework assignments fully, which includes Test information. Homework often determines a great deal of your grade. Use the entire allotted time. Work ahead on projects that you know you have due. Use this time to study for quizzes and tests. It is important to study each subject, each night. If you have no homework, review the work or notes from that day. Reread all items covered in class and add to your notes. It is important to build on what you have learned each day so that you are not overwhelmed at test time. Read ahead. Read the next section and make notes. Correct incorrect homework or tests for the sake of gaining knowledge.
- Reading Plan: When reading an assigned section or reading ahead, have a plan and attack the section. First Pre Read: look at the objectives that may be included before the section. Look at the review questions after the section before you begin. Skim the main topics and subsections. Look at the concepts or vocabulary words in bold. Read material, and then make notes about the most important concepts. Reread if necessary. Read supplemental materials to improve knowledge of the subject or increase your vocabulary. Ask your teacher for supplemental reading material.
- Schedule additional time for test studying, etc.
- Study Groups: Form a small study group to review material. The group should be small in number and comprised of serious students who wish to learn and are dedicated to staying on task.
- Be Organized: This is essential. Keep separate binders for each class, sectioned for homework, class work, etc. Keep only relevant things in your notebook. Keep your book bag free of clutter and distracting matter. Always be prepared with your materials.
- Make sure you take all needed materials to class and home each day. A carpenter will not keep his job if he doesn't bring his hammer to work. You cannot succeed without the tools. You cannot borrow books, pencils, etc. and you can't do your work at home with materials locked away in your locker.
- Keep a planner. Write down due dates and homework assignments. Test dates should be listed as well as up-coming projects.
- Progress Reports are an excellent way to check on your weekly progress. **They will be distributed each week in Physical Conditioning class and you are expected to return them completed and on time.**
- Be on time. Never be tardy to class. ISS, detention, etc. does not help your grade. While you are signing in and roaming around, you are also missing instruction. It sends a message to the teacher that their class is not important if you cannot be there on time.

- Be in class. Do not ask to wander to the media center or gym or anywhere else. Stay in class and use your 90 minutes effectively.
- Exhibit correct Classroom Behavior. No referrals or warnings. Be a model citizen to show the teacher that you are taking things seriously. Class time is not for socializing with your friends. Stay on task and follow class rules. Be in your seat with materials out when the tardy bell rings, and do not pack up before the bell rings.
- Ask for help; if you need help ask for it. The teacher does not have a crystal ball, so be specific on what you do not understand. Do not just say, "I do not understand." Arrange for tutoring before or after school if needed and rearrange your schedule to make it happen.
- Participate in class. Do not sit in the corner like a plant. Use the accepted class procedure (raise your hand) and contribute to the discussions and ask appropriate questions. Remember that no teacher can pour it in your head; you must be a willing participant in your education.
- Eat breakfast and get plenty of sleep. Tired and hungry students worry about putting their head down or how hungry they are and do not do their best work.
- Complete all work and TURN IT IN ON TIME. Late work costs points or may not be accepted. WRITE IT DOWN.
- Work and prepare each day academically like you would on the practice field. Test Day is game day. The work you put in during the week will pay off. Relax, you did your work...excel. Leave no stone unturned to make better grades.

As a team we have to perform better in the class room. Our goal is to have an average GPA of 3.0 each semester. **You are expected to achieve at the highest level possible in the classroom. Nothing less will be accepted.**

PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

The importance of physical conditioning is well documented. It will improve performance in every sport and it will help reduce the chance and severity of injury. It improves self-confidence and helps improve work ethic. The following chapter deals with the philosophy and the importance of physical conditioning in the East Football Program. It will give the player a better idea of why we do what we do and what is expected every player in the physical conditioning program.

PHILOSOPHY

East High Physical Conditioning is a major priority in our program. We believe that the correct mixture of weight, plyometric, speed, cardio and flexibility training will help us become a better football team, reduce injuries and reduce the severity of sustained injuries. We feel that a balance of all these are necessary for us to reach our maximum potential. It may be the most important aspect of the entire football program. We believe it should be a disciplined, organized and highly supervised tie by competent instructors. You must be a highly motivated individual who believes this is extended practice and not merely a P.E. class. It should be taken seriously and demands mental and physical preparedness with no excuses. **It is expected that you give your best effort each day, each rep, each set.** We must set individual goals and team goals and strive to meet these goals.

OFF SEASON

You can divide our Physical Conditioning Program into two parts; off season and preseason. Off season is defined as January through the end of the spring semester. Our major goals are to increase power and strength, to increase or reduce body mass, to become more flexible and agile, to maintain a good cardio condition and to improve running form and speed. We must take this 5 month period more seriously. You will be given a set of class rules and a grading scale for the second semester. These rules are stringent and will be adhered to in order to get the most of our 90 minutes together each day. **Everyone is expected to set individual goals and do everything possible to meet these goals so that we may meet our team goals.** The weight room will also be open Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons from 3:30 to 4:45 pm for makeup sessions and extra work. Weight class will be highly structured and time for individual workouts will not be possible. For individual supplemental lifting the afternoon is perfect.

CORE AND SUPPLEMENTAL LIFTS

Workouts four days a week will focus on upper or lower body and will include Core and Supplemental lifts. Core lifts are those that we will do throughout the year and will be completed first. These lifts are designed to provide the backbone of our weight program. Auxiliary or Supplemental lifts may often change and are used to add to the basic power lifts and work smaller individual muscle groups. Speed and flexibility will be worked on a variety of days as will other aspects of Physical Conditioning. **(Note: The East Physical Conditioning program is developed by qualified strength and conditioning professionals. It is ever changing, evolving as trends change. It is important that lifts are designed with the space, equipment, athletes you work**

with, and safety concerns in mind. Qualified instructors are a must.) One day a week will be a primary running and classroom day with some supplemental lifting.

ATTITUDE

Physical Conditioning must be taken with a positive attitude. Remember that we will set the tone in the weight room. It is practice, and in the spring, the intensity level should be higher than at practice. Players are to complete every rep of every set each workout. There is no excuse for tardiness, not dressing or not fully participating. **Players are expected to encourage and push all members of their groups and class.** There will be no roaming the weight room and there is to be no horseplay, touching, or off task behavior allowed. It is dangerous to be off task and not concentrating on the movements of the lifts and the movements that must take place between the lifts. The weight room is Game Day and must be treated that way.

SAFETY

Safety is foremost in the weight room. Again...NO HORSEPLAY and stay with your group. Never remove the safety bars when squatting and always have spotters on all free weight lifts. Spotters should concentrate on their responsibilities and provide assistance at the appropriate time. You are expected to keep your work area cleared and weights racked. Collars should always be used. All group members are responsible for changing weights and beginning the lift on time. Always wear a belt when using lower back muscles. Proper technique will always be a key in preventing injury. Be coachable and change your technique if the instructor wishes you to do so. Proper clothing and shoes are also necessary for maximum safety. Warm up and warm down exercises will also reduce injury.

MAXES

If the workout is game day, Max Day is the Super Bowl, the National Championship, the Stanley Cup or an Olympic Medal and in order to win that medal you must have prepared throughout the nine weeks. Maxes are important to measure success, determine the next nine weeks workouts and to provide proof that we are getting better. You have to have a super mentality on Max Day. You will be tested on Bench, Parallel Squat, Cleans, and a variety of speed and agility exercises. Remember your maxes figure into your six weeks grade. Warm up properly; try near your old max and then move up slowly... Never jump 25 pounds between attempts but do not over attempt light weight and burn yourself out. **To be successful, you must be in a positive, "I Believe, I Will," zone on Max Day.** If you are unsure when you get under the bar you probably are beat. Use proper technique on Max Day as it is the absolutely best way to do it. Again, Usain Bolt won the Olympic Gold in the 100 and he always started in a good stance.

LIFT-A-THON

The Lift-a-Thon is a vital fundraising part of the program. It is an excellent way for you to earn camp tuition and the little extras we need in the program. New weight equipment, pregame meals, socks, etc. are all bought with the funds. **Every player is expected to participate in the Lift-a-Thon.**

PRE-SEASON

In order to be successful we must increase our numbers and regularity in the summer workout program. Preseason is the time between the end of school and the beginning of school. It is an excellent time to increase on the progress made during the Spring. A greater emphasis is placed on conditioning in order to start August practice in shape in order to spend less time on conditioning when practice starts. Players must make a required number of workouts during the summer counting camp and mini-camp. **Every player, no matter what HE feels is the stature of his importance, is expected to make his workouts on time and carry the game day mentality throughout the summer.**

GOAL SETTING

Goal setting is very important in physical conditioning. Players should set goals for the new nine weeks and for the end of the year. Goals should push the athlete to achieve at a high, but attainable, level. **All players should complete the year-end Max Goal and post it on a bulletin board, dresser mirror or refrigerator at home. It should be somewhere the athlete can see it every day.** Athletes should re-adjust these goals when goals are met, or whenever it becomes necessary to adjust. (Goal sheet on the next page.)

YEAR END MAX GOAL SHEET

Fill in Now

Bench_____ **Squat**_____ **Clean**_____

40 Time_____ **Vertical Jump**_____ **Broad Jump**_____

Body Weight_____ **GPA**_____

Fill in the Following After the 3rd Nine Weeks

Bench_____ **Squat**_____ **Clean**_____

40 Time_____ **Vertical Jump**_____ **Broad Jump**_____

Body Weight_____ **GPA**_____

GAME DAY

After all the work is done, after the months of weight training and conditioning and the hours of concentration and practice, it is time to play the game. Thousands of reps have prepared us for this day. It is important that after all of that time that Game Day goes smoothly and in the best order possible to ensure that 100% concentration is possible for the game itself. Many times a great week of practice can be lost with less than perfect concentration on Game Day. It is everyone's responsibility to limit distractions and make sure that preparation is not wasted. Remember that the physical preparation for tonight's game is over and the most important mental aspect must be honed and channeled on Friday. In this chapter, Game Day concentration and expectations will be discussed.

THURSDAY NIGHT

Successful game day preparation actually begins on Thursday Night in many aspects. It is important that the meal you eat the night before a game is nutritional and appropriate. Please refer to the nutrition section on a proper game preparation meal. Secondly, it is important that you get enough sleep the night before the game. Time management skills must be practiced to ensure this. Fuel and rest are the driving factors for physical performance on Friday night. If attending a JV game on Thursday, it is important to schedule ahead and not neglect obligations.

Players attending JV games must behave appropriately by staying on your own side and not contacting players from the other team. This game is for our JV's not a show time for Varsity players. Do not draw attention to yourself and away from our team.

THE HEAD COACH

The Head Football Coach sets the tone for game day. At East Mecklenburg High we have a great group of parents that provide breakfast from 6:45-7:15 AM on Friday mornings. It is a great time for students to fellowship, pickup game jerseys if they are to be worn at school that day. It gives the Head Coach the opportunity to see who is at school on time and remind the team of the fact that this is a school day and that they should focus on the task at hand. As the Head Coach it is important to send that message to players and coaches. "You have a job to do until 2:15 pm and that is to be the best student, citizen and coach you can be."

Things that the Head Coach must review are game plans, travel plans, pre game meal times, itineraries, extra man bag check lists, special team substitution lists, and all the routine things a head coach does on a weekly basis. The Head Coach should see each assistant on game day during the day if possible. Seek input, thoughts about the game, etc. Let each of them know that their ideas are important and will be considered.

THE SCHOOL DAY

Athletes are students first and foremost. It is important that all players focus totally in the classroom the entire school day. Take care of all obligations in the classroom and focus on a low key approach all day. Your performance will be spotlighted on the field with OUR PERFORMANCE. No discipline issues on game day. **Wear the jersey proudly but remember**

that you are expected to receive NO DISCIPLINE REFERRALS. Prepare for school in the same positive way and eat a good breakfast. Do not skip lunch. Eat a nutritious lunch even if you have to pack it yourself. Hydrate yourself throughout the day with plenty of water. Lay off the soft drinks... No Pepsi, Mountain Dew, Dr. Pepper, Coke, Sundrop, etc. As the school day winds down, begin concentrating on kickoff and pregame meal

PREGAME MEAL

Pregame meal has very little to do physically with your Friday performance other than not being hungry before the game. Remember your body will be performing on what you have eaten over the last couple days. The purpose of pregame meal is to provide a meal to curb hunger, but most importantly provide a time that we can all sit down together and begin the focusing process for the game. It marks the beginning of the GAME MENTAL PREPARATION and serves to separate the School day from GAME TIME. It is important that we begin the focus here and leave all other thoughts and selfish wishes outside. Players are expected to be on time and alone when arriving for pregame. Your girlfriend should not escort you to pregame meal. The pregame meal is a football function for players and coaches only. Players may talk quietly during the meal about the game and assignments. Post game activities and others should not be topics of discussion. Loud talking, laughing, joking, playing or anything that keeps us all from being 100% focused will not be tolerated and will be corrected. You will be asked to leave until Monday. You are to eat what you are given and nothing else to ensure that we do not have upset stomachs on Friday. From the time that school is over until the game is over, players are not allowed to leave campus. After pregame meal players are expected to report to the field house or an alternate location. Roaming the campus is not an option. The pregame meal is a dedication ceremony for the game and will be treated as such.

IN BETWEEN TIME

The time between pregame meal and pregame warm-ups are sometimes the most difficult in football. Hurry up and wait and wait and wait. It is easy to lose concentration and be distracted from the upcoming game. **Everyone prepares different mentally but players are expected to follow several guidelines.** Again, there will be no laughing, loud talking or other activity where the game is not the focus. There should be no conversations about outside activities at all. Quiet conversation about football is OK. Music is your individual preference if it helps you but it will be restricted to headphones. Players are allowed on the game field up until walk through if it is quiet warm up time. All players are expected to be at walk through on time and have total, 100% focus on assignments. All players will be in the locker room and will be doing final uniform adjustments and have meetings with their position coach for last minute reminders. At ten minutes before your assigned group will go out, you are to stretch and put pads on. All players will go out with the appropriate group.

AWAY GAMES

It is important to be ready for an away game. **Players are expected to follow the following guidelines for travel.** In almost every case we will eat pregame meal at home, dress at home and do walk through at home. All of the pregame instructions and most in between time guidelines are applicable. The offense will ride on one bus and the defense on the other. Players are responsible for making sure they have all their equipment when busses are loaded. **Players are expected to observe locker room behavior on the bus ride.** It is better if you do not sleep but concentrate on game assignments and mental readiness. Envision the kick off and your role in the game. Remember that you are a representative of East High and will respect the property, players, coaches and administrators of the team we are playing at all times.

PREGAME WARM UP

It is imperative that this last step before the game gets the utmost attention. We are just one step away from the game and emotion and concentration should be paramount. Looking in the stands and trying to talk with others is unacceptable. Concentrate on your assignments and technique. Run at game speed, get loose. Play the perfect game in pre game. No dropped balls or overthrown passes. Emotionally, imagine how you will perform in the game. When we go off the field after pre game you should be ready to play. A quick drink, a few last words and go out to perform at a high level. Do not let your intensity drop when you enter the locker room. You can't turn it on at the last minute. Build your intensity throughout the Pre Game sequence.

GAME TIME

The conductor conducts the orchestra. Imagine the orchestra if all the players are not in tune and anticipating every move. The game is similar. The coaches are the conductors and the game is the music. You are the orchestra pulling together to create the music. If the musicians are worried that their part is not large enough then the music suffers. If there are conductors trying to direct the game in the stands and on the track, the music suffers. Keep focus on the game. Know the down, distance and situation. Anticipate what will happen and be ready. If you are the cymbal player who plays the last striking note to end the game and it is your only note of the evening, perform it because the music is not complete without the note. If there are multiple conductors that are all trying to set their own tempo and agenda, the orchestra falls apart and the music is horrible. Same thing with the game. Do not be distracted by sideline coaches and wandering thoughts. The stands and fans are off limits during the game.

Players are expected to be in the game, never late on the field, never late for a special team. Players are expected to hustle on and off the field and keep helmets on while on the field. Never pull your helmet off while on the field. Hustle on and off regardless of the situation. Be ready for a sudden change and anticipate it. A fumble or an interception must be reacted to in a positive way, we will stop them or we will score. If you are a substitute then be ready, you are only one play from being on the field.

We are all expected to conduct ourselves appropriately. We will not fight, taunt, argue or intentionally participate in unnecessary roughness. As coaches we will not bait officials. You are not to speak to other players or officials unless the official speaks to you. You will follow officials' directions. You will control your emotions or you will not play anymore. You will show respect for teammates, coaches, officials, opposing players and coaches at all times.

POST GAME ACTIVITIES

At the end of the game you are to assemble at the 50 yard line in a single file line with your helmets on. You will shake hands with the other team and offer only congratulations on the spirit of the game with, "Good Effort," or "Good Game," regardless of the outcome. You are then to find Coach Shuford and listen to the final thoughts on the game with eyes and hearts on the coach's thoughts. Take any criticism constructively. After those thoughts we will always give thanks for the effort then always breakdown as a team, all in participation after a win or loss.

If the game is a home game, you may then talk to parents and friends, but they are not to be on the field. Then you will make your way to the locker room. On away games you may quickly visit with the parents and friends then exit the stadium. We will board the bus and return to school. Behavior on the bus should be appropriate.

When entering the locker room after the game, appropriate behavior is expected. Players are to turn in uniforms right side out in a timely manner. Socks are to be right side out and returned after each game. Remember that from Friday night to Monday you should engage in no activity that will keep you from being on the team on Monday.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Football is a learning process. We are all in it to learn and grow as players, but more importantly as individuals. It is important for the success of our team that you build strong character.

Thousands of athletes play high school football each year. A very small percentage will go on to play college football and a minute number may go on to play professional football. Our goal is that you go on to be successful, respectful members of a community where you will use the lessons learned in football in a positive way. The lessons are much greater than X's and O's and the game you are preparing for is much larger than high school football. The following chapter deals with the character traits that you are expected to be exposed to in the East Football Program.

DEPENDABILITY

Players in a team game are expected to be dependable. Everyone on the team depends on you and you depend on the team. You should always strive to be in the correct place at the correct time. You are expected to always be present and on time. As a team we depend on that. You are to stay out of trouble. The team depends on you to exhibit appropriate behavior so that you will be at practice and in the game. The team depends on you to do as you are coached and carry out your responsibility to the best of your ability. The coach has to be able to count on you just as your family or your spouse, employer, or children will count on you later in life. The team has more important things to focus on than worrying about a player not being dependable. We all fail in football and in life one time or another, but we must depend on individuals to bounce back and be there the next play.

One of the first years I served as a Head Coach I had a starting free safety that disappeared after school. He was not at pre game meal, or walk through or pre game warm ups. He came steam rolling in the back door of the field house about ten minutes before kickoff. The young head coach questioned him about his dependability, trustworthiness, commitment, maturity etc. The young head coach learned a valuable lesson about one of the most dependable players he had on his team. The player with tears in his eyes says very quietly, "Coach, I am sorry. I have been at home. My mom just got home from her second job and I've been taking care of my three year old twin sisters. She had to work over. My dad is passed out drunk in the floor. I will do better." The young head coach vowed to do better.... **Listen**

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Along with dependability goes being trustworthy. Basically that means, by your actions your teammates can trust you with anything. From being confidential in personal matters to taking the QB on the option, you must earn the trust of your teammates. Teammates must be able to trust that you will be there for them if they need support both on and off the field. Teammates must

trust that you will carry out your assignment without question. You must be able to be trusted with responsibility for the team and not let your fellow players, coaches, and yourself down. Would you trust anyone on your team with your wallet or car keys or to discuss a problem that you are having with your parents at home? Remember that others must trust you without doubt or fear.

HONESTY

Honesty is a trait that is much admired. Be truthful and honest in all dealings with your teammates. It goes hand in hand with being trustworthy and dependable. Your word should mean something. If you pledge to do something then your actions and efforts should reflect that, as we have all heard the saying, "Talk is Cheap." Back your words up with your actions. Usually when people are less than honest, one lie perpetuates another and almost every single time you are less than honest, you are caught in that mistruth. Your reputation will soon be tainted and will make it impossible to earn trust and respect. Admit your faults and be honest with yourself. I do not have to put on airs and pretend to be someone or something that I am not.

HUMILITY

Athletics are great for teaching players to be humble. Celebrate your teammates when they make a great play and celebrate your teammates when you make a play. No run is great without the effort of the offensive line. No pass was perfect without pass protection and a receiver who caught the ball on the other end. Interceptions are often caused by great defensive pressure up front and so forth. Deflect the spotlight and remember those who seek the spotlight after a great play are caught in the spotlight when the play is not so great. There are many components to a team and NO ONE PART IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE TEAM. Handling the praise and the great times with humility earns respect from everyone and those same people will support you in the bad times. Do not brag or make a spectacle of yourself, accolades will come but team accolades are much more important than individual honors. Humble in success and non-blaming with defeat.

It is funny that sometimes that you have players that have a great deal of humility whose pride in their work ethic and pride in team development you see all throughout their life. I have three former players that were among the most humble kids I've ever coached. They never sought the spot light. They always down played their accomplishments and lifted their team mates up. The first won a Super Bowl ring with the St. Louis Rams and the greatest Show on Turf. The second played in an All-Star game and a World Series with the Atlanta Braves and the third has an NCAA National Championship ring at Florida State University. All three were great players in their own rights. All three were better persons and team mates.

SELF-DISCIPLINE

Football is a great teacher of discipline but more importantly, self-discipline. Self-discipline is the ability to keep yourself on track when there are constant pressures to get you off track. A self-disciplined player follows team rules when there is peer pressure to do otherwise. A self-disciplined player knows he has to contain on a pass play and must go outside even though the Offensive Tackle is giving you the inside. A self-disciplined player makes himself get up and go to summer workouts when no one is there to get him up and going. The same guy will get up and go to class when he gets to college when you have to walk a half mile to class at 7 AM when its 14 degrees at Appalachian State with 7 inches of snow on the ground and Mom is not there to push you out of bed. The self-disciplined completes the entire task without someone standing over him. The self-disciplined person does the right thing for the pride of how it makes him feel and that is his reward. Lastly the self-disciplined player knows the reward comes at the end when the goal is accomplished and the gratification is not without a sacrifice.

In my first summer at East Mecklenburg we had a free football camp for youth football near our school. I asked several of our “leaders to help”. The camp ran each day from 8 AM- 12 PM. The first morning I pulled into the parking lot at about 6:45 to make sure everything was ready. One of the players I had asked to help was already there.... Sitting under a tree. He could have been texting or surfing the web or any number of things. It would have been understandable. Its summer, school just went out. This young man had a book. This young man had started his summer reading for English class. This young man demonstrated that self-discipline throughout his time at East. Accolades have followed attending a prestigious college, achieving over a 5.0 GPA, making all-conference each of his four years, earning the Luke Kuechly Defensive High School Player of the year given at the Bronko Nagurski Awards in 2016.

MATURITY

Maturity is a state of mind that is reflected in your actions. Maturity is taking responsibility for acting correctly at the appropriate time. It is tied to all those above: being dependable and trustworthy. Honest and self-disciplined in a humble way. Maturity is knowing when you messed up and do not make excuses. Maturity is handling a problem in an adult manner even though it may be difficult. Maturity is acting your age or rather acting with wisdom greater than your age. It requires logic and problem solving skills. It requires communication skills to confront problems without fear. Maturity is weighing the consequences before making a decision. Maturity means you are acting with forethought not impulsion. Mature people think about others instead of instant gratification of one’s self. And finally, maturity means intrinsically knowing what appropriate behavior is in a variety of settings.

PERSERVERANCE

Perseverance means simply that you never give up. If you fail, you retry. If you fail, you try a different way. If you fail, you get help instead of quitting. No matter the score, you keep playing hard and by the rules. You are dedicated to your goals and try all means that are ethically correct to reach those goals. You are the “Little Engine That Could”. You are the ant at the picnic that drags the whole slice of bread back to the colony. We all fail, but are judged by the resiliency of our spirit. Will you accept failure, or bounce back, pick yourself up, dust yourself off and get back in the game? You have all heard the old adage about riding a bicycle: Once you learn, you never forget it. If you had given up on your first attempt, the first time you fell off, the first time you skinned your knee, you never would have learned and all you would have accomplished was accepting defeat. There is another saying, “One you quit the first time it becomes easier.” Once you accept losing, it becomes easier and you accept the “you win some you lose some” attitude. At that point, you are accepting that life is a flip of the coin, a roll of the die, or a cut of the cards and you have no control of the situation. You have become a Sleprock. Sleprock is the little guy on the Flintstones that accepts his fate in life as a jinx with a black cloud flowing him claiming, “Wowsie, Wowsie, Woo Woo.” The last example is one from history. Germany, under Hitler, invaded Poland on September 1st 1939, and by June 1940 controlled all of Europe except for one small island... Great Britain. Hitler ordered constant bombing of Britain, day and night, to break the spirit of the British. Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of Britain, gave one of the most inspiring speeches during the Battle of Britain with the constant bombing and the British Royal Air Force badly outnumbered. He stepped up to the microphone and said these simple words, “Never, Never, Never, Giver Up.” They didn’t. In the year 1941 the United States entered the war and Hitler never invaded Britain because he couldn’t break the perseverance of the British.

RESPECT

Respect must be earned. Respect is an appreciation of others talents, beliefs, actions, etc. Respect is appreciation for your own standards and beliefs. Respect for teammates and their unique talents and situations in life is important. Respect for your own standards and adhering to those is important. Respect for your opponents is a must. Respect for authority is a must in our society. Respect is a two way street, you cannot expect it without giving it, but you must be willing to give it first. It cannot be held hostage; if you say, “I am not going to respect you if you are disrespecting me,” then you probably haven’t given it in the first place and may not respect your own value system. Respect your body and its limitations. You are not invincible, respect life each day and protect it

LEADERSHIP

It is said that about 10% of people have true leadership qualities and 10% of people are strictly followers with no leadership qualities, leaving 80% in the middle that could go either way. I believe the percentage is about right; however I think that all people have some type of leadership ability it is just a matter of positive or negative leadership. Often times those with leadership abilities lead in a negative direction by being a naysayer, by not hustling, by being a prima donna or by caring more about selfish, immature thoughts than about the team. The negative effects of a leader that wastes his ability on negativity in thought and action is a cancer that grows out of control and can strangle the very life out of a team. Leaders emerge each year on a team, both negatively and positively. There are also that 80% that sometimes waste a hidden talent to lead. What is leadership?

It is easy sometime in sports to see leaders as the vocal, rah-rah types in the locker room. Remember however that empty speech without deed and action is not respected and these folks are not always the best leaders. In the section on character traits we talk about all the character traits that can be developed. Many natural born leaders have these traits and fine tune these qualities. Leadership is the "IT". What does Ben Roethlisberger have that many other quarterbacks in the NFL do not have? Does he have a great arm or super speed? Can he run like Cam Newton? Does he always use the best judgment in throwing into coverage? The answer to most of the questions is No. Ben Roethlisberger have "IT." "IT" is that certain unexplained edge that makes those around him better than they are and makes Ben Roethlisberger have himself better than his physical talent. The "IT" is leadership. It is a positive air that comes from Ben Roethlisberger have that includes the way he deals with all people from the star down to the last player on the roster. He displays dependability, trustworthiness, honesty, humility, self-discipline, maturity, perseverance, and respect to everyone. It is his nature. It has been developed throughout his lifetime and honed over time. It is more than like it is the way he treats everyone he comes in contact with. It is genuine, honest, and cannot be hidden.

Leaders can't stand losing and will do whatever it takes to be successful. They refuse to lose. Does everyone have what it takes to be a leader? On some level, yes. Leaders again, Show not Tell. I think all players can be a model of work ethic, attendance and attitude. We all can sacrifice, have tremendous ethics and be positive about the team. Different people have different leadership niches. For example we have players that are school leaders, out front, involved and respected. We have players that are leaders in the weight room with a desire to get better and not give up. We have leaders that express their faith. The main point is to show great character and lead by example in a positive way.

Leading by Example

As mentioned earlier, great leaders usually lead by example. What does that mean? That simply means that in every act and deed, you can feel how hard they work and hard they try to get things right. A great leader would never miss a workout, would never skip a set or a rep and would encourage you to finish your rep. He is wringing wet when he leaves the weight room. If he finishes his workouts, he would do crunches or dips or ab work until time was up. He would never sit down in the weight room. He doesn't even hear the music he is so absorbed by his goals. He can tell you about his sets and reps from last week and what his goals are for next week. He loves squats and power cleans. He loves the feel of a great burn and the exhaustion of trembling legs. He leads every line and does the exercises right with great technique and effort. The plyos make him happy and he sees a 400 as a chance to get better. He doesn't grumble about drills or the weather because the team is all that matters. This is just in the weight room, what about on the practice field?

He is first there too. Focused and ready, chinstrap buckled and shoulder pads hooked. He is not getting dressed on his way to the field. He always sprints out to the field. The sun doesn't bother him, just makes him feel better about the work that he is doing. He sprints to the water for breaks, and then he sprints back. Kids line up behind him for drills. They know he knows what to do and they watch his technique and quality reps in drills. He never goes through the motions. He listens to the coaches all the time and doesn't look down or at others while instruction is going on. He works to get better to make the play he couldn't make yesterday, the throw he couldn't catch yesterday or the block that he missed. You better work hard or he will be breathing down your neck. He takes his reps in team at full speed and gives a full speed look when playing scout team. He makes you better by being there and you know what; you're glad that he is there. He runs his conditioning hard and tries to be first. The leader never complains about practice because he has sold out to the coaches and believes they know best. Does he lead in the locker room?

Of course you know he does. He never lingers in the locker room until last. He is focused in the locker room before the game. He encourages those who have had less than a stellar practice or game and believes in his teammates. He is always up for practice and buzzes around the locker room talking about football and this week's game. You don't see him on the phone before practice and games because no one has a phone on the field. You can always count on him being there and players tend to gravitate around him. Teammates enjoy being around him, not because he is the most popular player, but because they know he will lead them in the right direction.

He leads in school as well. You never see him in the office. He is respectful to all teachers and administrators. He always says, "Yes Sir," or, "No Ma'am," and is polite and pleasant. He works hard to overachieve in the classroom. He always has his homework. He understands that school and good grades are important. He is always on time for class and is always prepared. You never

see him in the wrong place at the wrong time. He follows team rules and offers positive choices for those who sometimes do not. He may not be the smartest or best student, but you'd never know it by the way that he works at it. He does not tolerate negative conversations about the school, other players, his team, or coaches in his presence. He will not participate and is vocal in his defense of any of these.

During the game he is a master of execution. He encourages players to do better, to keep fighting. He is always poised and doesn't lose control. He shows good sportsmanship and is respectful to the officials. You know you had better do your job because you do not want to disappoint him. He could care less if he touches the ball or makes a tackle as long as we play well as a team. He is superbly focused before the game and you can see that the game is being played in his eyes. He cares if we lose. It is painful and something he is determined not to let happen. He has pride in his team and knows only one speed. He never takes a play off. You want him to be on your team with the game on the line. He has "IT"... You know it and he knows it too.

These are all examples of how a player can be a leader by example. I do not know if this perfect leader exists, but it is something that all players should aspire to. Everyone exhibits some of the qualities, but they are all examples of how everyone can become involved in leadership roles both on and off the field. Of course you need the emotional voices in the locker room, but it must have substance behind it. You know the saying, "Don't do as I Do, Do as I Say." Leaders have the opposite philosophy, Do as I do, Not as I say.

I once had a quarterback that played and started for two years for me. He had success at the position and had grown as a player. Going into his senior year he comes to me and says, "Coach, you know I've been thinking about this whole thing. He lays out his whole plan. It had required a great deal of thought, self-evaluation, and sacrifice to develop his plan. He laid it out to me step by step. "You know we have a sophomore quarterback that's pretty good. You know he's a great runner and man, a great arm. Coach, you know he's probably better than me and I've played QB since I was 7 years old. You know Coach, I think I can help our team more at TE. I know I can block and catch and we really don't have a TE coming back. "I'll be the backup QB if you need me but let's do this".

I agreed with the young man. He played great at TE and made all conference. The Sophomore QB made all conference at QB. He did miss two games and the unselfish leader slipped in and played great at QB. During the season our punter was dismissed from the team and the first volunteer we had was our new TE. He had never punted before but worked at a variety of kicks and actually was nominated by the local press for all-state. This young man identified a problem on our team, led by example and solved it. I was proud the day he came to me and said, "Dad, you know I've been thinking about this whole thing.

Leaders have a tremendous knack at solving problems. They offer creative and practical solutions to problems. They communicate well, but again it is much easier to communicate when you have something of substance to say. Leaders are not always born, they are made. There are leadership qualities in all, but a team can only survive if they are in a positive manner.

We all know the leaders who thrive on discontent. They are not happy unless there is controversy and unless all are unhappy. They enter into any conversation that is negative. They point out faults of others but never their own shortcomings. They tend to blame others. They depend on others to make decisions then criticize those decisions. They coast and do not handle pressure very well. They have problems meeting expectations if they are higher than their current level. They go through the motions. They bait the coaches with behavior, waiting for a reaction so that someone else will be at fault. They focus on little things and not the big picture, for example, the small amount of discomfort associated with conditioning. They do not see how the conditioning helps three weeks down the road. They tend to be very selfish, worrying about their touches and are very undisciplined. They dwell in the shadows when things are good but lurk to undermine when things go wrong. They usually lead your team in senseless penalties. Then it is always someone else's fault. They are not pleasant to be around but draw a heavy audience when things are not going well. They would never consider switching positions for the good of the team because it may not be the glory position. They skip sets in the weight room and usually are late for class. They visit the office because someone else always disrespects them. We all know these people and many may follow them. To be successful, we must eliminate this behavior and this type of leadership will not be accepted. Why would you follow a leader that has the ship pointed to the bottom of the ocean? It is important that we rise above the negativity and MATURE into able leaders.

PRACTICE

Included in this section will be the expectations for practice sessions at East Mecklenburg High School. Practice is an integral part of success. It should be conducted at a brisk pace with maximum reps and preparation for games. We try very hard to create a routine so that players can meet expectations. We want to stay on an organized schedule and teach with repetitions. Practice is organized with fundamental periods to help players improve their physical skills throughout the season. Our goal is to improve throughout the season. Practice is broken into individual periods during which athletes work individual skills and assignments, group periods where small groups work on group concepts that do not involve everyone, team period during which the offense or defense works together involving all players, special team practice, and conditioning which will ensure that we play as hard in the fourth quarter as we do in the first. Skills are taught in progressions from the smallest parts to the complete picture. Coaches are held to the belief that all drills and repetitions have a purpose, are well-organized and time efficient.

The purpose of practice is to mentally and physically prepare for game competition in the most effective and efficient way. Expectations for each part of practice and general guidelines are included below.

Players are expected to be in their individual groups with all equipment buckled and stretching when Coach Shuford steps on the practice field. It is each player's responsibility to hustle down after school, get dressed and taped, and be on time. Linger in the school and parking lot is not conducive to being on time. Players are expected to be at every practice and totally commit to 100% effort each day.

Players are expected to stretch properly to avoid injuries and use the agility period that follows to get quality reps at your position to get loose and focus on technique. Players are expected to be coachable and to show intense concentration during individual period in order to improve each day and week throughout the season. Players are to carry out assignments during group period at a high level of intensity. Team periods are to be "full speed," focusing on using individual skills while executing offense and defense. Scout teams are expected to give full effort to simulate game speed and make our teams better. Conditioning should be a positive time to prepare for the coming weeks. Conditioning drills are not as effective at half speed and will not be tolerated. Players are expected to stand up and never hang heads or bend over constricting lung capacity during conditioning.

General Guidelines for practice:

- Sprint wherever you go... to water... to the team... to group
- Keep helmets on and buckled unless Coach tells you to pop 'em off

- This two hour + period is ALL football. No other conversations or thoughts should be had.
- Accept criticism and coaching in a positive manner. Coaches do not correct you as a personal attack on you. They want you to be better football players and will push you to do so.
- You will address coaches as “Coach” or “Sir.” Answers such as, “Yeah,” is not as appropriate as “Yes Sir,” would be.
- Respect your teammates during practice. There will be no unnecessary cheap shots, taunting, or baiting at practice.
- Encourage all in a positive manner.
- Lead by example.
- Running backs and receivers will always turn upfield and sprint 8 yards full speed.
- Players will get in a good huddle and sprint to the line of scrimmage.
- Griping and complaining about practice or drills is not positive and will not be tolerated.
- We try very hard not to repeat periods but will if coaches feel we have not given supreme effort.
- Mental concentration is expected to improve at every practice. Be a student of the game. Pay attention when you are not in a drill and learn. Be a sponge; absorb every tip and coaching point. Practice is not a social event. It is time to improve individually and as a team.
- In order to improve as a football team, we must have more enthusiastic, more concentrated and more intense practices. Get the job done and we will not linger.
- Repetitive mistakes at practice cannot be helpful to the team and will be eliminated.
- Any discipline-related matters that are taken care of with Coach Shuford after practice will be completed without comment, argument or complaint. No questions. It is used as reinforcement for correcting behavior that was not in the best interest of the team or the individual. Players are not to take discipline personally, as it is not intended to be.

OPEN PRACTICES

We want our parents to feel welcome at practice, however to limit distractions we have a few simple rules. These guidelines should help keep these distractions to a minimum. Practices will be open to parents and siblings of players and middle school coaches only on Mondays and Thursdays. Tuesdays and Wednesdays are our heavy work days. In an effort to keep these practice lengths reasonable we expect our players to concentrate at a 100% level and through years of experience have found this works best. I remember a parent I had on a very successful team who visited practice most everyday. He would yell at his son and show his disgust with every play from a hill we had overlooking the field. He was truly a football expert, an encyclopedia of knowledge. Every Friday night that carried over to the stands. “Run the ball” “throw the ball “ He worked at a local tire store near the school. One day I ventured over to that

store and wondered back to where he was doing a complicated front-end alignment. My knowledge of front end alignment is limited. I watched for a bit then started giving him advice on how to do it interjecting my disgust when things didn't go like I wanted. After about 15 minutes that father walked over to me and says very quietly, " Coach, I get it. I trust you with my kid." He became one of the most supportive, non critical parents we ever had. Never saw him at practice again.

Parents are to stay well off the practice field and out of the end zone areas on either side of the practice field. Parents are not to distract players by communicating with them or with the coaches during practice time. Practices will be closed if there are distraction problems, as have been experienced in the past. Again, we try to concentrate for the 2+ hours each day without distractions. Siblings are not to be on the field, playing with equipment or footballs. We want to keep these practices open so parents can appreciate how hard our players work. We want to keep our practices open so that the community will understand what our program is about. Practices are not a social event or an opportunity to criticize players and coaches as has been the case in the past. Everyone must realize that this time is for coaching and players, but we do want our parents to feel free to observe. Knowing and respecting each other's role is important and will be covered in the section of community support.

ABSENCES AND TUTORING

All absences from practice must be excused by Coach Shuford beforehand and not afterward. There must be a valid excuse other than couldn't get a ride, had to work, went to the mall, or had to get my driver's license. During the pre-season please call Coach Shuford at school or on his cell beforehand. The tardy policy is the same. Any tardy must be excused by Coach Shuford beforehand. The trainer may excuse injured players from participating in practice but they are to be at practice.

Players may follow the tutoring policies and receive tutoring as necessary. On Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays players may tutor from 2:20 to 2:50 if they tell Coach Shuford beforehand and bring a note from the teacher. A tutored player with a note must report to tutoring by 2:20 and be at practice by 3:05. Tuesdays and Wednesdays are our heaviest practice days. Players are allowed to go to tutoring during the same time restrictions if the teacher personally sees Coach Shuford or emails Coach Shuford during the school day beforehand and requests the session.

THE TEAM CONCEPT

One of the simplest and most often used quotes that defines the TEAM Concept is, “There is no I in team.” It is so often repeated that the message has been lost. Everywhere you turn there is glorification of the individual. You see professional athletes with post touchdown demonstrations bringing attention to themselves. You see professional athletes with post touchdown demonstrations bringing attention to themselves. You see college and professional athletes interviewed on TV, radio and in print talking about themselves and their value. You hear high school kids talking about their accomplishments and their touches. You have parents drawing attention to themselves in the stands because their child isn’t the star or isn’t playing enough. Parents are ruffled because the child wasn’t offered a scholarship. You hear athletes using the term “I” often, but how often does the first sentence begin with us, we, or the Team. Think about your response to this situation. You come home after practice and the first question asked is, “How was practice?” What is the answer? Would you answer, “I did really well today? I made a great block or had two super runs. Coach was all over me today.” Or would you answer, “We had a great practice. Everyone was really sharp. We threw the ball well and our defense was awesome.” Be honest about what your answer would be and how you view our team.

In a perfect world there would be no stats. No individual passing or TD’s or rushes, just team stats. No tackles for loss or interceptions, just team defense and points allowed. There wouldn’t be players of the week, just teams of the week. Before you can truly be a TEAM player, an unselfish player would take the following quiz.

Would you rather have 5 touches, have your teammate have 20 touches and a win over West Brunswick or you have 25 touches and three TD’s in a 24-22 loss?

Would you be content playing only 4 plays if you knew you weren’t big and strong enough against a big, physical team?

Would you be embarrassed if you didn’t play one play?

Deep down in your heart, do you pull for the guy in front of you or hope he screws up so you can play?

Have you ever clicked your teeth, mumbled under your breath or pouted when things didn’t go your way?

Have you ever gotten an individual picture with no team picture?

If you were hurt and out for the year, would you come to practice?

Would you vote for yourself as captain?

Have you ever voted for yourself for an award?

Which would you rather have in your scrap book...? An article about a great East win or a color picture of you on the front page.

Would you rather watch a game film of a great game you had from weeks ago or film on this weeks' opponent?

Have you ever thought about quitting because of playing time?

Would you give up being named State Player of the Year for a Conference Championship?

Have you ever been disappointed or mad after your team wins?

Have you ever made negative comments about a player or coach?

These are questions that if you answer truthfully and not the way you know you are supposed to answer would make you think. Football is a team game. A QB has never thrown for 100 yards by himself and so forth. You know the examples. Football is a great game because it is a team game. Teams achieve unbelievable feats with the team concept firmly in place. It's like the old allegory about trying to break a twig. It is easy to snap a single twig but when you bundle 50 twigs together it is nearly impossible to break. Abraham Lincoln knew this with the quote, "United we stand, Divided we fall," that the United States would be a stronger more powerful country together instead of torn apart by the Civil War.

Is it possible to have great individual stats in the framework of a team?

It is definitely possible if the concern is for the team and you let the individual accolades fall where they may. If it is a secondary concern then yes it will be even more probable. The statement is worth repeating: Players who search for the spotlight when things are good, often find themselves in the spotlight when things go wrong. Those whose major concern is for the team in good teams will find support from the team, not blame them when things go wrong. The key is to perform at the highest level possible within the framework and dynamics of the team. Help your team do what is necessary to win. It may mean giving up a few carries or passing attempts or playing tackle if needed.

But, Coach, I play Linebacker.

One of the most difficult things about the dynamics of a football team is getting the right people in the right places. Everyone wants to be a running back or TE or linebacker. Coach Lou Holtz

while at Notre Dame had tremendous success in getting players in the right position. He had a knack of taking a 6'5" tight end who was a step slow and moving him to OT. While marginal in quickness for a tightend, he would have super speed and agility for a tackle. Linebackers are often moved to defensive ends or linemen and become great players, because of their speed and agility at the position. Here comes the team concept into play. Are you willing to accept the judgment of the coaches 100% and sacrifice being a linebacker (cause I've always been a linebacker) for the good of the team. Would you give that position 100% effort or 50% effort thinking that if I do poorly enough they will move me back? What is your thought process? Would you ever be honest enough with yourself and thinking about the team to go to the coaches and ask to be moved to offensive guard because you think you could help the team win? Do you think more about what position you are playing than if you are helping the team? Have you ever thought that whoever put you in your dream position may have been wrong instead of your coach now? Would your parents be mad or disappointed if your position changed? Give serious thought to these hypothetical questions and inventory your feelings.

BEING A TEAM

Being a great football team and being a part of a great football team is one of the most phenomenal feelings in the world. Everyone cares for each other. There are no egos and little to no dissention. Everyone pulls for each other and everyone from the starting quarterback to the sub who plays very little is part of the team. It is a very self policing group. Expectations are set by the team and are often higher than any coach sets them. Players and coaches will work with a single purpose in mind: The good of the team. Fans and Parents appreciate the concept and go to the games to truly support the team and their son's individual accomplishments are secondary. Discipline is no problem on such a team because members hate to let the team down. It is not hard to get the team to practice, but they want to stay because they enjoy each other's company so much. Teams like this are special and hard to form, but almost impossible to tear apart. Go to the 20 year high school reunion where members were part of a great team and see who is hanging around together. They are huddled in the corner telling war stories and you can still see how much they truly care. If we want to excel in football at East that's what we truly have to create here. There is truly no I in team.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

We are instituting a standard of behavior for East Mecklenburg High School football players. The standard of behavior will be something we can all be proud of. As it is adhered to, it will help us improve our image in the classroom and on the field. It will be adhered to by all coaches and players without question. The standard of behavior will include guidelines for class, common areas at school, the locker-room, game behavior and the community. Items covered in this section may be repeated in several other sections but its importance warrants repeating.

As we are student athletes, the first area covered by these standards will be expected classroom behavior. All of these expectations, if met, will ensure will ensure that we stay out of the office with disciplinary action, help our reputation with the teachers at East Mecklenburg High School, and could help improve grades.

In 27 years as a head football coach there are many examples of students that have displayed positive behavior, leadership and added much to the school environment. I have coached Morehead-Cain Scholars and those that have attended military academies. Two of these young men were brothers that appeared one summer from Illinois and what leaders and positive role models for our school did these two young man become. The older brother was an excellent student. Once his AP Calculus teacher appeared at my door and says “ Coach, I have a dilemma. You know I have the older brother in class. Can you come down and observe this young man in class.?” Well I have spent years dealing with classroom behavior issue but this one was different. I go to the classroom, entre through the back door and my player is at the board working a problem, then the next one and a final one. I could see the kids got it when he engaged with them. After class the teacher looks at me and says... “He explains things on a different level”. As far as I know he had a time each day in class where the kids asked him questions and he worked problems. That young man graduated from the US Air Force Academy and served as a glider instructor for years.

The brother was too a bright young man but was quiet and reserved. Progress reports were always let’s say “Above Average” but he got it. He went on to the US Merchant Marine Academy. I used to have a picture on my desk his dad sent me shaking hands with President George W. Bush greeting him as he arrived for graduation on Marine One. You see that was one of his duties as Valedictorian. The point is that players touch people in the classroom as well as their coaches and teachers with positive behavior.

CLASSROOM

As a student athlete, I am expected to:

- Be in class everyday and on time unless ill.

- Come prepared to class with materials
- Address all teachers as “ma’am” or “sir” each time
- Complete progress reports on time and completely
- Be respectful of all teachers, substitutes, and students
- Keep my hands to myself, off other peoples’ property and person
- Not make inappropriate remarks
- Be in class 90 minutes each day. Players are not to ask to go to another teacher’s rom or the gym during class.
- Complete all assignments as directed
- Separate from my friends in the classroom
- Participate in class discussions with appropriate and well thought out comments
- Make the best grade I can possibly make in class
- Follow every instruction without question
- Follow all class rules
- Receive no discipline referrals

Secondly, we must set a good example in other areas of the school. (in hallways, quad, student center, cafeteria, bus lot, on the bus, etc)

COMMON AREAS

In common areas of the school I am expected to:

- Respect all teachers, faculty, staff, and students
- Address all adults as “ma’am” or “sir”
- Keep my hands to myself, off of other people’s property and person
- Not use profanity or inappropriate remarks
- Not to roam around campus or be out of class without a reason
- Not be in the parking lot during the school day
- Follow all school rules
- Not to wear hats or any head coverings in the building
- Always dress appropriately
- Never raise my voice in the common area
- Behave appropriately in the cafeteria picking up trash when finished
- Always behave in a mature manner and will separate myself from those who do not
- Receive no referrals

Thirdly, we must act appropriately on the practice field and locker room.

PRACTICE

In the locker room and/or on the practice field I am expected to:

- Respect all players and coaches
- Address all coaches as “sir” or “ma’am”
- Refrain from the use of profanity or offensive statements
- Keep my hands to myself, off of other people’s property and person
- Practice honesty
- Be a positive influence on those around me
- Not degrade any player or coach in speech or thought
- Keep my area neat clean and I will keep my equipment stored properly
- Not wear cleats in the locker room
- Help with equipment and house keeping
- Think only about football responsibilities for the limited time I am there
- Hustle, sprint everywhere, keep equipment buckled, follow directions explicitly
- Be at practice every day and on time
- Turn in laundry properly
- Observe all game day policies
- Behave in a mature manner and encourage those who do not to change

Fourthly, we will follow proper game procedures during games

GAME

During the game I am expected to:

- Respect all players and coaches
- Address all coaches and officials as “sir” or “ma’am”
- Refrain from the use of profanity or offensive statements
- Be a positive influence on those around me
- Not degrade any player or coach in speech or thought
- Respect other players, coaches, and the officials. I am not to talk with officials unless I am spoken to
- Not bait, taunt, or trash talk other players
- Keep my helmet on at all times on the field
- Not receive any unsportsmanlike penalties
- Not intentionally use unnecessary roughness
- Understand that ejections and fighting will not be tolerated

- Keep my attention on the game, not in the stands and I am not to be coached by parents or friends hanging on the fence
- Shake hands in the appropriate manner after the game
- Turn in uniforms correctly

Positive behavior will be exhibited in the community away from football.

BEHAVIOR IN THE COMMUNITY

In the community I am expected to:

- Address all adults as “ma’am” or “sir” every time
- Practice positive character traits when dealing with others
- Obey all laws
- Obey all training rules in regards to alcohol, controlled substances and supplements
- Drive carefully and safely. Slow down
- Always behave in a mature, appropriate manner and separate myself from those who do not
- Be a leader in the community
- Be generous with those who are less fortunate than yourself
- Never degrade the coaches or players in the community. Always defend the East football program in thought, speech and action
- Refer anyone with negative thoughts or comments to Coach Shuford.