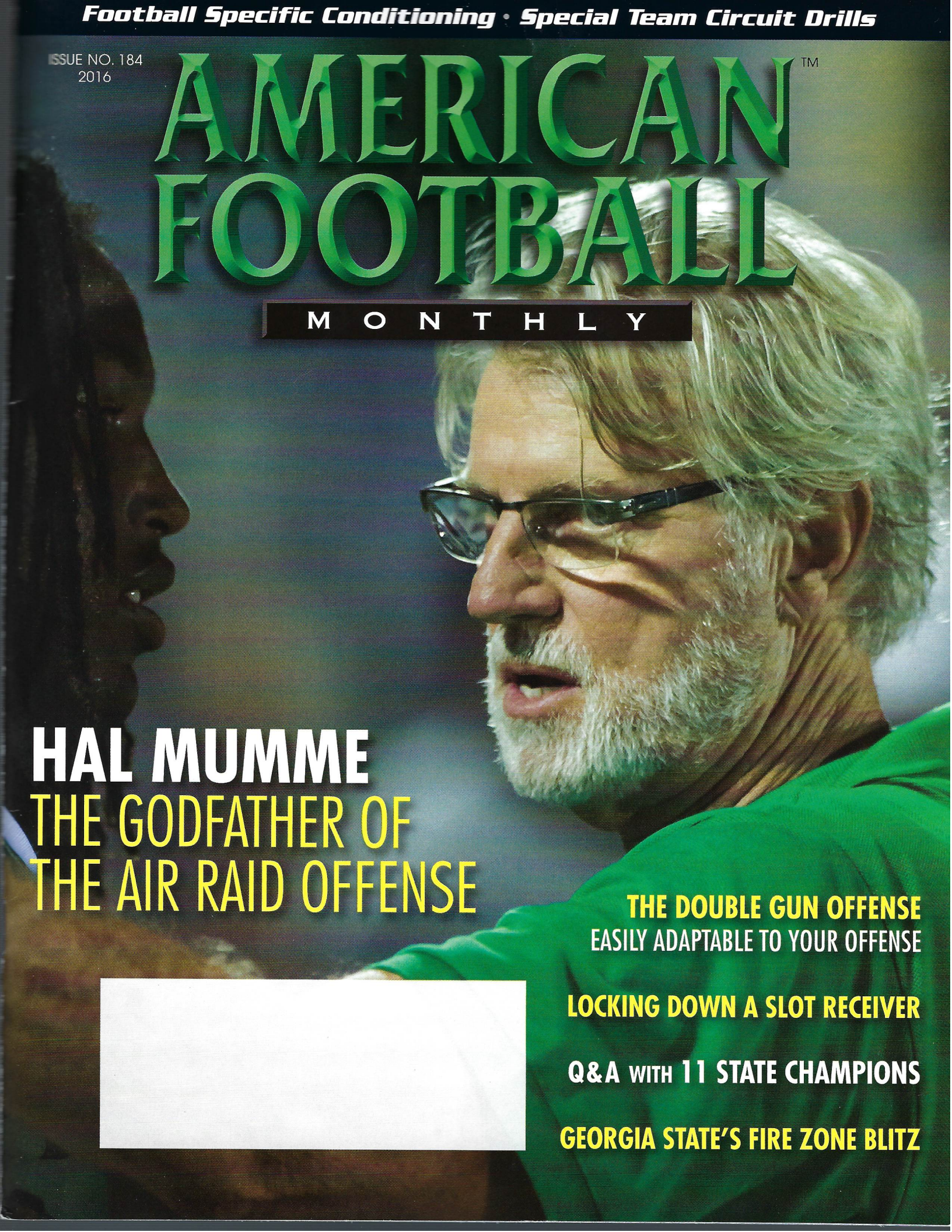


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# AMERICAN FOOTBALL™

M O N T H L Y



## HAL MUMME THE GODFATHER OF THE AIR RAID OFFENSE

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## HOW TO DEVELOP A STEADY STREAM OF 'CHAMPIONSHIP LEVEL' QUARTERBACKS IN YOUR PROGRAM

### PART I

By Eric Smith • Director and Coach • Winning Edge Skills

There is not much argument in any level of football that to win consistently and compete for championships you need strong quarterback play. So what defines 'strong quarterback play' and how do you develop that consistently within an organization? This series of articles will lay out a clear path that can easily be followed in any program given the proper attention.

Let's first discuss what goes into the makings of a great quarterback. From there, you'll be in a better position to choose *who* to invest your time into and *how* to develop them year after year so that the success of your program can become predictable.

In January 2008, Geoffrey Colvin published a fascinating book which every football coach in

America would benefit from reading called – *Talent is Overrated: What Really Separates World Class Performers from Everyone Else*. The premise of the book fundamentally proved through credible scientific based research studies that barring a certain body type required for a specific sport (like the size of an NFL lineman or speed of an NFL receiver) anyone can achieve mastery in a chosen sport 'subject to' the following qualifying factors:

1. Assigned Programming
2. Requires Feedback
3. Takes 'A Lot' of Practice
4. Is Mentally Challenging
5. Isn't Much Fun!

Well isn't that really just the sum of 'qualified coaching' combined with a 'strong and highly focused work ethic'? The case studies cited in his book scientifically supported the fact that any individual can, through the structure above, reach a higher level of success though applied 'work ethic' than by simply relying on 'talent' alone.

Look at it this way (**Chart 1**). Everyone has what I call a 'Natural Level of Achievement' in which their combined past experience and natural abilities will take them to a certain achievement level. Think of this level as a 'ceiling' of achievement. An individual will bounce off that ceiling if they continue to rely solely on effort and natural ability.

For any athlete to break through that 'ceiling' and move to 'mastery' or to reach a higher level beyond which their natural abilities will take them,

**THIS IS OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM:** Dr. William Eickhoff, founding member of the John Maxwell Team, certified coach, trainer and speaker in the field of leadership development. • Paul Herfurth, Executive Advisor, The Pacific Institute • Chet Tart, Radio Executive, Talent Coach • AFM Editorial Staff • Football community leaders and coaches throughout the nation.



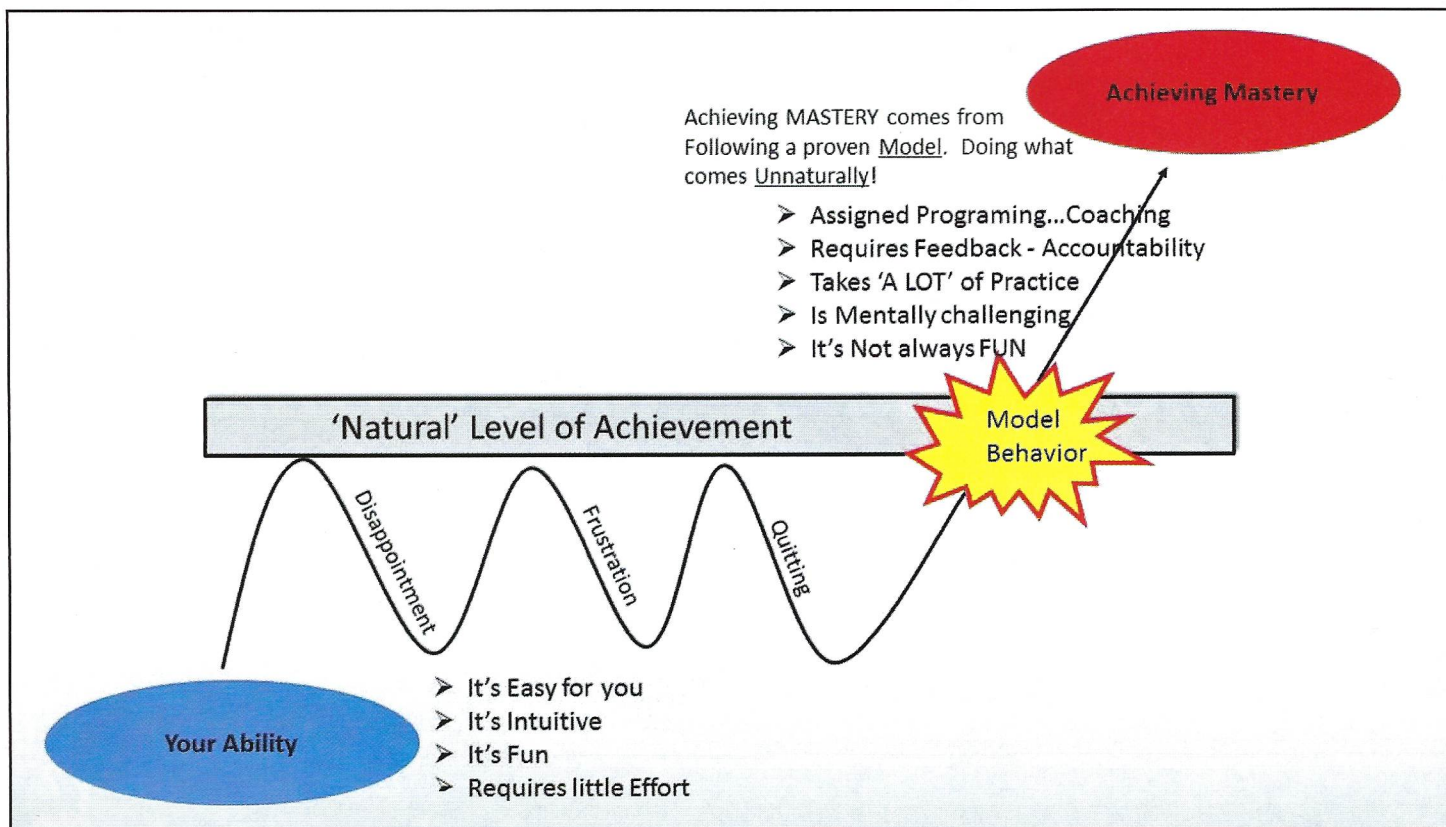


Chart 1.

programmed learning is required. One has to apply effort differently. In a way that is *unnatural* to them and *requires a lot of hard work that isn't necessarily fun*. Proper coaching from a qualified person is required. I call this 'Modeling Behavior'. It's following a proven method or system. It's following a path that others have laid out previously. No one succeeds alone. It seems so simple when we look at it this way but finding that path is not always easy. In this article, I hope to lay out a straight forward path for you to follow to properly develop quarterbacks.

When we look at this perspective foundationally and apply it to coaching today's quarterback, I can confidently say that coaching today's quarterback to a high level is beyond the scope of the vast majority of junior or high school coaches either from a depth of knowledge standpoint or from an availability of time standpoint. The quarterback position may be the most difficult position to play proficiently in all of sport. Many agree that it's also the most under-coached. So while I will give you development content and self-improvement drills for your quarterbacks in these articles, I do suggest that you encourage your aspiring quarterback to get outside help from a qualified quarterback coach either through both camps and/or private coaching.

As a head coach or coordinator, you're not expected to know the fine details of developing quarterbacks. In addition, you shouldn't be opposed to outside coaching because scheme is not something that these sort of camps and coaching get into. They predominantly coach only widely accepted foundational techniques

and skills. In my experience, if a coach has any resistance to outside coaching from a reputable quarterback coach, then it's normally ego driven. Even the top NCAA and NFL quarterbacks still seek outside help when it comes to fine tuning their mechanics.

### How to Identify the best 'candidate' for playing quarterback?

Often a coach at the high school level will utilize what I call the 'show up athlete' approach. Here, they take their best overall athlete who can throw the ball well enough to run the system at a decent level. This can work and you can win a lot of games if you have a great supporting cast but it rarely wins championships and you can't build consistent year-in and year-out success with this approach.

Ideally, you want to find kids at an early enough age, ideally seventh and eighth grade level athletes, who either are or can be inspired by the challenge of 'being a quarterback'. Kids at this age can be groomed for leadership plus they haven't developed any bad mechanical habits that can be very difficult if not impossible to break. Finding athletes who are inspired by the challenge of 'being a quarterback' is a lot different than 'playing quarterback'.

The show up athlete method above defines athletes who 'play quarterback' but they're normally not 'quarterbacks' in terms of everything that being a QB entails. I'll take it a step further and say that I often see HIGHLY drafted NFL athletes 'playing quarterback' but predictably, they normally never lead their organization to high level success and their careers are normally short lived. 'Being a quarterback' involves so much more.

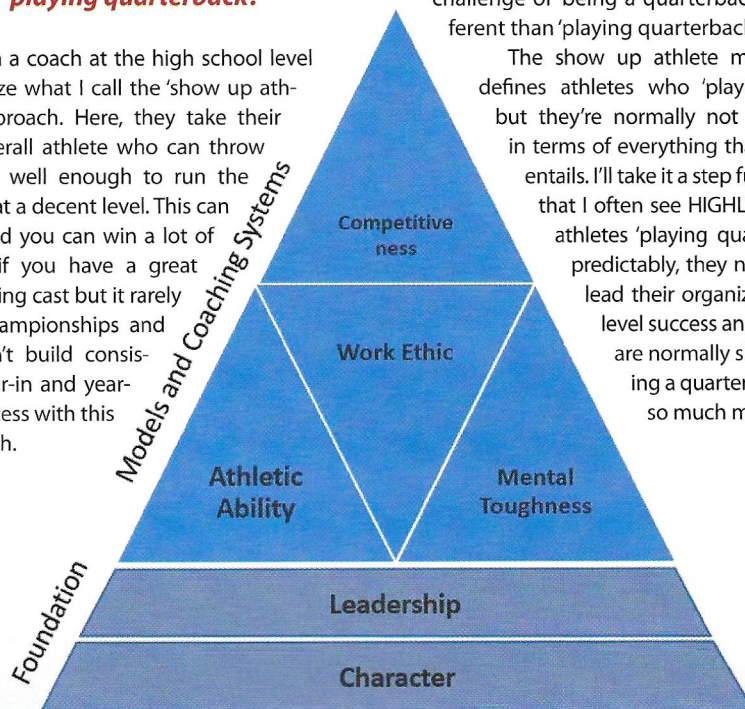


Chart 2: Pyramid of Success



➤ 'The Law of the Lid'\* – An organization will never surpass the level of its leadership

\* John Maxwell – 21 Irrefutable laws of leadership, 2007 4

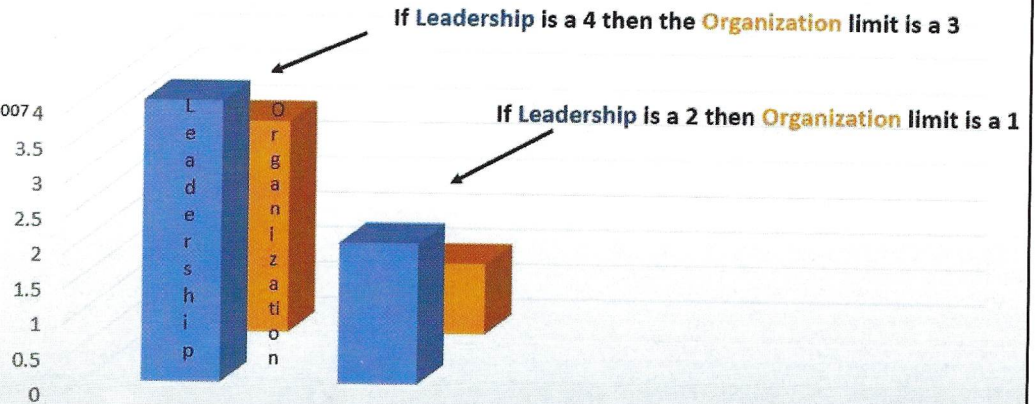
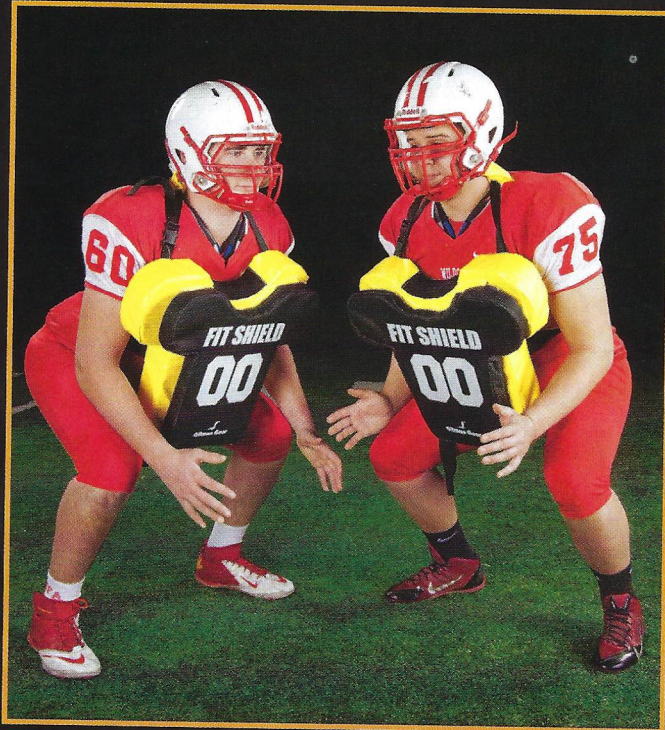


Chart 3: Law of the Lid

It requires a strong foundation of both character and leadership upon which relationships, work ethic, models and coaching systems can be built (Chart 2). Ultimately, this is the product that will represent the face of your organization and will be largely responsible for how successful it can be. Renowned leadership author John Maxwell defines 'The Law of the Lid' (Chart 3) as a predictable measure of any organizations maximum level of success being just below the level of its

leadership. So on a scale of 1-5 if leadership is a 4 then organizational success will never be above a 3. If leadership is a 2 then potential organizational success maxes out at 1. When applied to a football organization, leadership would represent the administration or front office, the head coach and to a large degree the quarterback! So when it comes to your quarterback, 'Character' and 'Leadership' are of great importance! ▲

**About the Author:** Eric Smith is the director and coach of Winning Edge Skills, a program "to give quarterbacks the proper foundation of mechanics, physical and mental skills and leadership attributes so they have the opportunity to succeed at the highest level." Coach Smith played quarterback at Bowling Green from 1984-1988 and spent a number of years in both the pharmaceutical business and the real estate industry.



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