

TROJAN FORCE

Head Coach **Allan Trimble** has built the Jenks High School program into a perennial power in Oklahoma and overcome adversity along the way.

By Lynn Jacobsen

Allan Trimble, the Head Coach at Jenks High School (OK), authored the book 'Coaching Football Successfully' in 2001. In it, Trimble wrote that success should not be measured solely in terms of wins and losses. "Success comes in many shapes and sizes," said Trimble. "It could be mentoring an athlete who is facing adversity, having your team show improvement as the season progresses, or having both a loyal and supportive coaching staff." • Trimble clearly has been successful. He was named head coach at Jenks in the spring of 1996. In the fifteen years since, Trimble has taken the Jenks 6 A program – the state's largest classification – to the championship game 13 times. In the process, his teams have won nine state titles, an average of 12 wins a season and compiled an overall record of 186-18. His tenure also includes a six year title run (1996-2001) and a 25-game winning streak. Over his 15 years as head coach, the Trojans have lost one or less games in 11 of those seasons.

Trimble is the first to admit he inherited a very good high school football program when he was hired at Jenks. But not even Trimble imagined Jenks would become the high school juggernaut that stands as a measuring stick for programs both in and out of Oklahoma.

"I've been blessed," Trimble said. "I've worked with some very good coaches and of course, we've been blessed to have some great athletes.

But we also have really great kids. And that is what really makes a great program. Rocky Calmus is a perfect example. He was a great athlete who went on to star at Oklahoma and then played with the Tennessee Titans in the NFL. But beyond being a great athlete, Rocky wanted Jenks football to be really, really good and consequently, he gave great effort."

TRADITION

Tradition is another attribute to which Trimble credits success. "I walked into a program that had proud tradition," he said. "Jenks won its first state title in 1979 under Perry Beaver. The expectations grew from there."

The final piece to the puzzle is community support, Trimble said.

"Our community really supports our program," he said. "They have invested a lot of time and money in our program and you can see on the kids' faces how much they appreciate the support."

Sustaining that high level of play the last 15 years takes all of those components. "We've been fortunate in that our kids understand what it





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takes to get to the top and we've been able to cultivate that attitude to sustain our success," Trimble said.

His take on winning might be a little different than most coaches. "Winning creates a whole different set of problems in today's world," said Trimble. "Certainly it's hard to build a program that doesn't have a winning tradition but it's also very hard to stay on top. It's human nature to think that if you win, you are good and that you are good enough. We fought a little bit of that in 2010.

Last fall's Jenks team was typical of the Trojan tradition. "Our football team was outstanding, we had great kids and we had very little adversity during the season. You try to create that sometimes because often having to overcome tough trials is the only way to get tougher and get better. Last year that caught up with us. What we did was not judge success by the scoreboard but by eking out as much improvement as you can. Make that your focus. We don't talk about winning all that much. We talk about improving. If you talk about perfection and winning only, that can lead to frustration. If you can talk about improvement, you can get better every day."

COACHING INFLUENCES

Trimble cites two mentors who helped him develop his recipe for success.

Ron Wolfe was his high school coach and mentor during Trimble's playing days at Cleveland (OK) High School. "I had a really close attachment to coach Wolfe," Trimble said. "He took me under his wing and influenced me in a good way. He was a great motivator. He was one that never really worried about the talent level of his squads. He worried about getting the intensity and effort out of his players. He was a great coach and a great mentor. He helped me become a better person."

The second was Larry Cariker, a girls track coach at neighboring school district Owasso. "Larry was one of the first guys I worked for," Trimble said. "When I was at Owasso (1995), he built the girls track program from nothing into a really good program simply by treating kids the way they needed to be treated. I played for a lot of really good coaches, worked for a lot of good coaches. Some guys you learn from how to do things and some guys you learn from how not to do things. There are life lessons to be learned through football just as there are life lessons to be learned in everyday events. It's taking advantage of those moments to teach that makes success."

Trimble's roots run deeper than football. He has carried over his Chris-

tian beliefs into the sport in which he has excelled as a coach. "My philosophy and approach – and not necessarily just as a coach but as a Christian man – is to try to mentor kids. To me, their success can be defined in a ton of different ways. We try to encourage kids to be young men of character, to be community servants."

TOTAL DOMINANCE

Nicknamed the "Legion of Doom" defense, Jenks allowed a mere 9.7 points per game in Trimble's second season as head coach in 1997. In his first six years, Trimble lost just four times in 83 games en route to the six consecutive state titles and 25-game win streak. "Sometimes it's harder to sustain the success than to initially build it," Trimble said. "Getting players to buy in each and every year is the biggest ingredient."

Former Trojan defensive back Jason Carter agreed. "No one wanted to be the team that the state championship fell on," Carter said. "It became so important to us as players to sustain the success. Coach Trimble was instrumental in getting us to believe in ourselves and to carry on that winning tradition."

FACING ADVERSITY

Despite the dominance, the Trojans have encountered a number of issues during Trimble's tenure. The sudden death of former player Sean Mahan's father prior to the start of the 1997 season left the team shaken. "When I looked up and saw the whole team and all the coaching staff there it was a tremendous boost for me," Mahan said of the funeral. "Coach Trimble creates a family atmosphere. My heart was overjoyed with how much support the team showed my family. From that point, Coach Trimble has always been a part of my life."

Prior to the 2006 season, tragedy struck again when senior Garrett Bennett died in a car accident following a team outing. And then there was the suspension dealt to Trimble and an assistant coach after an investigation into the eligibility of a transfer student.

The Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association, the governing body for high school athletics and activities, suspended Trimble three games into the 2009 season. "It was a very difficult situation," Trimble said. "I've always taken the approach that you accept responsibility if you make mistakes. You correct those, move on and become a better person. Ultimately, that's what happened."

Some of the media coverage surrounding the suspension was very negative, the first time Trimble had experienced that during his career. "It was most difficult just because of the way it affected my wife, Courtney, and children, Tylar and Tori. The girls were old enough to understand what was going on and all the questions from the media. It put an amazing amount of pressure and stress and an unreasonable environment for my family."

Trimble was not allowed any contact with his coaching staff or players when the suspension happened in early October of 2009. "That was really hard," he said. "I've either played or coached football since I was in 7th grade, probably close to 40 years. In addition to no contact, I could not be on the central campus where the high school is located," he said. "It wasn't a big deal not to be in the office every day. My coaches all know their duties and perform them every day. But the idea that I was banned from speaking to them, some of whom are my closest friends, was extremely difficult. I go to church with three of those coaches yet I couldn't talk to them."

Trimble turned the experience into a learning opportunity. "For me, it was certainly fulfilling to see my staff pilot that ship through some hard times and never skip a beat. As a head coach your mission should be that your operation continues on in better fashion when you're not there."

The Jenks team finished 2009 with an 13-1 record, losing in the state championship game to cross-town rival Union High School, 52-19. Trimble was then reinstated on June 1, 2010 as head coach and led the Trojans

to another 13-1 record, again losing the championship game to Union in a 50-47 thriller.

UNION RIVALRY

Union has been Jenks' arch rival since Trimble's first season in 1996. Located nine miles from Jenks, the two football powers have enjoyed one of the top rivalries in the nation. Both teams are traditionally ranked among the top prep teams in the nation annually. Their regular season game, known as the Backyard Brawl, draws regularly 35,000 fans. Too many to fit in either of their stadiums, the game is played at the University of Tulsa.

A documentary film about the rivalry called 'King of the Mountain' was made in 2003. They were also featured in the premier episode of 'Greatest High School Football Rivalries' which was a national television series produced by NFL films.

"The last few years there has been a lot of parity in the two programs," Trimble said. The two teams usually play twice a year, the first coming early in the season in a non-district showdown with the second usually coming in the state title game.

"The Union game is the ultimate test," Trimble said. "Those are the two best programs going right now in Oklahoma. It's a great test of your coaching staff, your players, your will. The week-two game is a great way

INSIDE TRIMBLE'S HUDDLE

AFM asked Coach Trimble to describe, in general terms, the nature of Jenks' offensive and defensive formations and strategies. His response:



Offensively, we've always been very multiple in our formations and personnel groups, but been very consistent in our power running game. We like the inside and outside zone play, 1 and 2 back power and G. I feel a solid ground attack allows everything else in our offense come together. We have, over the past few years, gone to a lot of spread passing concepts to complement our starting quarterback's ability, but we still rely on our running game to set things up. We have added additional running plays out of our spread formations so we can continue to run the ball effectively.



Defensively, we started off in 1996 being a multiple 4-3 defense with the ability to run an eagle front out of it, a lot of man to man, cover 1 pressures and some Buddy Ryan blitz package. With Rocky Calmus and some other great players, this defense really fit our personnel and our mentality. As offensive teams became more diverse and passing efficient, we have moved to more zone coverage and zone pressures to reduce our big play risk and get more defensive eyes on the quarterback. This transition has been difficult for me at times because of my aggressive mentality, but statistics show we are a more consistent defensive team since we've incorporated more zone concepts.

So many times in our program we try and build our system around our players and put them in position to be successful. Each year, our talent level and the talent at different positions change, so we have to be diligent to build things around our players who can make a difference.

- Allan Trimble



to test your kids. You're under a lot of pressure and media hype. It only makes you better to play in a game of that magnitude. It's great competition, great pressure, great crowd and it's only going to help you prepare for the rest of the season. From a fan's point of view, I don't think it can be any better."

FEEDER PROGRAM

The majority of Jenks Trojans players are homegrown products. Sure, they get their share of move-ins. After all, who wouldn't want to be associated with a powerhouse program that has averaged 12 wins per year under Trimble?

Jenks has one of the best feeder programs in the Jenks Trojan Athletics Club. "We've never required JTA to run the same system we were running," Trimble said. "We do coaches clinics with their coaches to show them what we do then we run their youth conditioning and end-of-summer combine camps for them.

Trimble and his staff encourage their youth programs to run the Jenks system, but do not insist on it. "We have an open-door policy with those coaches. We feel like the more of our offense and defense they apply to their teams, obviously the better off it will be for us when we get them. I've never encouraged them to do exactly what we do because so many times in youth football, they don't have the kids to run the same sets. They have to do what works for them."

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

In 1996, Jenks started a relationship with Special Olympics, something Trimble did while in college at Northeastern State University. "Special Olympics is something God planted in my heart that I just really enjoy working with those kids," Trimble said. "We incorporate Jenks' special Olympians into one of our weekly team dinners, teaming them up with their favorite Jenks football player.

"We've also had players mentor special Olympians and participate in events. We want to convey an environment of service to our program, working hard, placing the team ahead of the athlete." Trimble's teams also help collect food for a local charity. "We try to educate our players they need to make an impact on our community," Trimble said.

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In Trimble's view, consistent success incorporates a strong coaching staff, athletes with character, community support, and a proud tradition and feeder system. Trimble and his staff have built a dominant program in Oklahoma – the legacy should continue for years to come. ▲