

# [Junction thick of it as a player,](https://assignbuster.com/junction-thick-of-it-as-a-player/)

Junction Boys Book Report              “ losing doesn’t make want to quit. It makes me want tofight that much harder’,  inspirationalwords as they were, usually to be able to come up with something to say thatcan transcend mental stimulation and awe and can be heard or read again in a future without the essence that they camefrom as opposed to the forgotten clutter of an otherwise useless and blurry yesterday is something that isn’tconsidered easy by any means as often times we never have the words for evenone occasion we may find ourselves in but in doing so we’re left with nothingproductive and at best chocking from the knot in our throats caused by thosewords we couldn’t muster, or to some great words by Paul William “ Bear’ Bryantwho wasn’t a stranger to what many consider great things much less words. BearBryant now better recognized for his achievements in college football, thoughthe did pay his time on the field in the thick of it as a player, his successwas found on the side lines as the head coach. Honors include six nationalchampionships , fourteen Southeastern Conference Championships, one SouthwestConference Championship,  voted threetime American Football Coaches Association  Coach of the Year winner, twelve timerecipient of the Southeastern Conference Coach of the Year award, a twenty fiveyear stint at the University of Alabama as head coach, and on retirement held arecord for most wins in collegiate football history with 323 wins, and all thisonly seems fitting of a man who could hold and parade in a sense the nickname of “ bear’, albeit earning saidmoniker that stuck for a lifetime from taking on a challenged posed to him by acarnival that offered one dollar for wrestling an actual bear but standing atsix foot one and weighing in at one hundred and eighty pounds at the agethirteen surely must help or at least compliment his thirty six year span ofinfluence, during which he molded teams in his image with a focus onaggressiveness and toughness, a standard determined from his own playing timegaged from efforts such as playing against Tennessee with a broken leg, alegacy as a disciplinarian forged from creativity, word to word, sound tosound, and his first training camp with Texas A&M  in a small desert town in Texas was madewitness to his ideas and philosophy. The novel “ The Junction Boys” written JimDent tells a story about aforementioned training camp which has now reached theheight of legendary as for many it saved the institutions football program eventhough two thirds of the athletes he went in with did not survive the entiretyof the extremely demanding training program. The front cover slogan of the bookdescribes it best, “ Hot ten days in hell with Bear Bryant forged a championshipteam”.             The very first sentence of the first paragraph on thefirst page of chapter one of the book is almost too revealing by introducing usto the bear himself and allowing us to see him for the first time with thequote “ If you believe in yourself and have dedication and pride and never quityou’ll be a winner.

The price victory is high, but so are the reward” andthrough this we see not only a piercing look into the character and soul ofBear Bryant along with the reason he took on the job as head coach the TexasA&M in 1954 and why he put his “ junction boys” through his grueling bootcamp. Right off the bat we see what will be a familiar tone of strictness, asBryant meets his coaching staff and part of his team but with firmness to leteveryone single member of his team know that he is nothing less than their bossand coach, first impressions are hard to repeat after all. Bryant was initiallyperceived as mean as he was almost disgusted by the Texas A&M’s footballprogram recruitment, as it was made apparent that the school had been acceptingmore than one hundred boys for the past four years before his arrival and allit took to get in the team was be fortunate enough to be born in the state ofTexas along with having some tie to the school either through family or liking. Bryant regarded many of the boys appearing severely out of shape to be playing collegiatefootball, stating “ Ain’t ever seen football players this bad”, “ Where in the hell’d they getthese puke stains?”.

Despite all theterrible snaps and laughable attempts at blocking Bryant noticed his groupplayers had flashes of brilliance over the first couple of practices thanks tocertain individuals who he regarded as actually having good coaching at somepoint of their athletic upbringing and at the very least the want to be thereand succeed, Bryant stated he was after a player with more heart than talent. Bryant also started to pick apart which type of people his players were, whichone were starting scuffles and which were not, who contained a fighting spiritand which were polite, such as the case with Billy Schroeder who after apractice came up to Bryant and extended his pride in being able to play underBear Bryant, as his reputation from coaching Kentucky preceded him, however atthis point Bear Bryant over the course of a couple of initial practices and glimpsesat his team has already began formulating the seeds of what would be his legacyand let Billy Schroeder know in the best way he could “ I Wouldn’t get tocarried away, son. You might not feel the same after fall drills.”. It wasn’tup until an hour later after practice at a café that Bryant concluded hisplanning and informed his accompanying staff over bourbon what his intentionswere “ There’s gotta be changes around here. I’m getting’ ready to cut thesquad, to yank some boys off the field.”. The rest of the book has each chapterbeginning with a quote that dictates thought if nothing but words of wisdom.

The muscle of the team, the players themselves, are alltoo familiar, all people we relate too as we see ourselves in some of them orknow of someone with an uncanny resemblance to, some of which had luckily caught on early to what Bryan was looking forin his starters going as far as to play through broken noses and running untilexhaustion led them to pass out like Bobby Drakes, neglecting getting seen forear infections that inhibits them from improving such as Bebes Stallings, innerstrength was shown and did not go completely unnoticed how the commendabletenacity only raises the stakes over the course of that spring as Bear Bryantcontinues his shakedown of the football program and cutting players, postinghis cut list up every afternoon and for the lucky few who spared for the dayrepeated the daily prayer of hoping their name was not on that list the followingday. August thirty first  around ten inthe morning Bear Bryant had two buses on standby, which drew the players’suspicions as the practice field was only a walkable half mile away, andinformed his players to grab a toothbrush, a blanket, a pillow, and a sandwichfrom the cafeteria as they were “ going on a little trip”. Bryant also made itclear to the players before departing the meeting that none of them were tospeak of word of this to anybody but if they liked they can write a letterabout leaving school once they got to their destination. The players’ thoughtsafter the meeting can be placed under three categories, some were experiencinga thrill or a rush that similar to going on camping trip, others feared theworse and feared they were being taken to a religious camp or sorts, and lastlysome didn’t take Bear Bryant for one to take fun trips or waste time andconcluded they were on their way to a Bear styled boot camp.

They all crammedinto two busses anyways. The drive found them driving from the side of greenfields that turned into piles sand and dried river bed, Bryant was of coursetaking his team to Junction, Texas a county that Bryant had fund memoriesof  which he shared with the boys thatonly eased their suspicions and freight however he was unaware of the severedrought that had taken the land turning it into scorched land so hot that evenwith air conditioned buses the players were already drenched in sweat andfanning themselves with their own shirts. Bear was sold on the fact alone thatthe training ground was isolated away from distractions, fueled by anger ofignorance from not knowing about the drought, and determined to make a team outof his group of boys yet, later that night after card games and splashing inwhat can be considered a miracle of a lone river left in the town Bryant hintedto his players “ Lights are goin’ out in fifteen minutes. There will no morecard games and no more splashin’ in the water”.             The following day was inaugurated by slicing the dead ofthe morning with coaches whistles, yelling, and clatter of various item. Extremeswere being noticed by players as they weren’t allowed to have any breakfast bara glass of orange juice, vitamins, salt tablets, a policy instated by Bryant ashe feared eating a hearty breakfast would just leave the dry, weed lesspractice field covered in it, over the course of the day the players were notallowed to have water breaks to maximize the time Bryant had to get his teaminto shape.

Bryant figured some his boys were used to these harsh environmentsdue to their prior service as some of them were taking advantage of theircollege eligibility, and took great notice in players who kept playing pastinjuries, dislocated shoulders and broken backs alike it was Bryant’s goal to siftout the players who wanted to be there, regardless of talent as he figured hardwork will make up for it, he promised any one who would quit a bus ride homeand the ability to keep their athletic scholarships given that they work oddjobs in the locker room for the team. Over the course of ten days in that falltraining camp many players quit and took the free bus ride home, others werequit but did not take up the offer made by coach Bryant and found him to be soterrifying that they resolved it was easier to leave in the middle of the nightproviding for their own ride out of Junction. Athletes alike share the commontrait of competitiveness and in a camp with nothing but it easy to see nobodylike to lose, but apart of dealing with boredom from being in literally themiddle of nowhere, dehydration and heat injuries, the boys had to learn abouteach other and work out problems if they were ever to be a team, a dauntingtask considering the psychological, and for some physical, image of Bear Bryantrunning their lives at the training camp. During the camp, sport reporters andwriters who’s job included to visit each teams training camp in order observeand rank the team based on their training in the preseason were astonished athow many fewer players Texas A had compared to other schools and the poortraining conditions, even seeing some quit. All things considered the schoolwas ranked to finish last in their conference. On day five of the training campBryant did no make training sessions any easier however he did give the teammore freedom after practice to enjoy themselves as much as they could, in theend of the ten days he came back with half a bus full of players.             The start of the season came and to the expectations ofmany the team did not respond well to the first game as it was believed theplayers were still tired from Junction despite the newfound sense ofaccomplishment, losing their opening game against rivals Texas Tech 41-9 and asa result the players had to train in the same jerseys they had just lost inwith blood, sweat and all.

The rest of the season was not kind to Bryant andTexas A,  Bear was not use to a losingseason in which they won one game and lost nine. Other misfortunes fell as theschool was found to have been breaking rules by giving recruiters money. Beforeplaying SMU and not being able to sleep because of how cruelly he treated someof his players that some ended up in the hospital due to his methods he woke upthe team for meeting in which he explained how he came to be the man that isable to be their coach today revealing some of his past and why the teamshouldn’t quit despite their downfalls on the field, bestowing upon them ayellow capsule to keep and remind them to not quit and keep fighting. Thefollowing season was more productive on and off the field, to include integratingthe school, formally a boys only school, and performance on campus by Elvishimself, winning a seven games and finishing second in the conference, andcoincidentally the drought had ended in Junction with its first rainfall aftera lengthy pause. Bryant was also found to have told each player what he admiredabout them before their big game with rivals Texas and the story of “ TheJunction Boys”, at the end of said speech the reaming survivors of the trainingcamp came up to Bryant with the yellow capsule they were given a long time ago.

In many ways this story had familiar themes that I’m ableto relate to today, through the pains of growing up and joining the military. Some of the boys on the team had tragic tales and how or why they football, inmy life if met only a couple of people that have had similar events occur intheir life and it’s the reason they joined the military, to better their lifeor get away from something.  Some of theboys had to deal with the decision of leaving their families and jobs to startthis path of their lives in hopes it’s the better option than staying put withtheir old jobs not knowing for certain if they’ll succeed, being  woken up at ungodly hours, being asked topush your limits, being put in a confined space with the same sex, peoplechange, learning the line of respect and fear, how some people can become morethan just their job title, and quitting never achieves improvement in any form, sacrifice and determination do. Change is natural and moves us in differentdirections very different than those we might expect, chapter fifteen quotes  an excellent motto for this “ When you make amistake, admit it; learn from it and don’t repeat it”- Paul Bear Bryant.