

# Leadership in "remember the titans" essay sample



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## **Leadership in “ Remember the Titans” Essay Sample**

### INTRODUCTION

“ Remember the Titans” is a movie about an American high school football team integrated with black and white players who, under great leadership, inspire a town to “ trust the soul of a man rather than the look of him.” Set in 1971 Alexandria, Virginia, where “ high school football is life”, the school board is under court order to integrate the schools. Reluctantly, they replace Bill Yoast, a white coach, with Herman Boone, a reputable black coach, as head coach for T. C. Williams high’s new football team consisting of black and white players, the “ Titans”. However, Yoast, under invitation from Boone, accepts the position as assistant coach for the Titan’s defensive line and together they give inspiration to a “ city on the verge of exploding” from racial tension and defy the saying “[black and white] can’t work.”

Boone and Yoast’s management of the Titans reveals abundant leadership principles and values that allowed the Titans to develop a common desire to win and a respect for each other that prevailed over the rampaging racism of southern America. Their contrasting approaches to taking charge, strategic visioning, team building and communications revealed insights into what truly makes a good leader. They also teach a lesson on how a man can motivate with strong direction, garner respect through integrity, and, most importantly, inspire change through vision.

### TAKING CHARGE

A true leader takes charge by managing conflict, delegating tasks, taking responsibility and making key decisions. Boone's leadership was a forceful dictatorship, enforcing an environment of "zero-fun" that conveyed to the Titan players that he ruled with a tight fist. He did this to magnify the seriousness of their situation as one of the first integrated football teams and their need for perfection and a desire to win together as a team. In contrast, Yoast's approach to taking charge was a forceful, yet approachable, method that bred loyalty and trust from the boys. Although Boone and Yoast had vastly different approaches to taking charge, the combination of their approaches was a synergistic one that allowed the Titans to rise to the top.

Although one may tag Yoast's method of taking charge as the "the good guy's" approach in comparison to Boone's harsh dictatorship, Yoast actually ran a tight camp. During the brief window that we see him as head coach before his replacement by Boone, we see that Yoast gave forceful direction, created a disciplined organization, and always took responsibility for his team and their welfare. The best example occurred when a racial rally broke out near the school, and he forcibly ordered his boys to stay out of trouble by hauling them back to the school. Grudgingly, with no retaliation or resentment, the boys do listen to him, revealing the tight reign of discipline and respect that Yoast has on his team.

Boone was a true take-charge leader as he immediately asserted his authority over his team, Yoast and the other assistant coaches. He addresses to the team that "This is no democracy. It is a dictatorship. I am the law," asserting that he is a force to be reckoned with who will lead their team to success so long as they are willing and committed to doing as he says. On <https://assignbuster.com/leadership-in-remember-the-titans-essay-sample/>

the occasions when his authority was challenged, Boone's actions made it clear that his position as head coach was not to be usurped or trifled with. For example, when the white captain of the team, Gary Bertier, cockily informs Boone the positions that all the white players will be playing, Boone snaps him back into line by telling him that the Titans are his team, he is the boss, and Bertier is to refer to Boone when asked "Who's your daddy?" Also, during a game when Yoast puts an offensive player on the defensive line without Boone's authority, Boone replies with "you're cutting my legs from under me." He made it clear to Yoast that he did not appreciate having his authority challenged, as it made his authority weaker in the eyes of the team.

Boone also takes charge by making key decisions to address the racial hostilities between the players. On their way to training camp, Boone effectively 'integrates' the busses by dividing the two busses by defensive and offensive players, not by color. He also makes them, grudgingly, sit next to and room with a player of a different color. He gives each an assignment to learn one thing about each player of a different color on the team, stating "I don't care if you like each other, but you will respect each other." In this way, Boone addresses the racial conflict that centuries of social protocol have created to separate the team. He is aware that his first key decisions to break this hateful barrier will allow the team to grow together as a single unit.

Boone also delegated tasks to the appropriate people, a true act of a take charge leader. Despite having taken over Yoast's job, Boone knows intuitively that Yoast truly wants the team to succeed, no matter what the

mix of color within it is, and offers him the job as assistant coach for the defensive line. Boone never micro-manages Yoast, instead he allows his subordinate to manage defense with out interjecting, until Yoast asks him for help on their last game. He also delegates the roles of leadership to Julius, a black player, and Bertier, a white player, in an attempt to make them roles models to the rest of the team. They eventually prove Boone's intuition correct as they both break down the racial barriers by being the first two individuals of opposite color to begin co-operating and working together and become leading examples for the team. Also, Boone allows Bertier to make the decision to cut his own team mate and good friend, Ray, whose ongoing discrimination of the black players causes one of them to be injured.

Bertier's action proved how a delegated leader truly thinks for the team and is willing to make sacrifices for their success.

It is good to mention that, in this present day, most business practices do not practice the dictatorial, dominant approach that Boone used with the team as it is self-defeating and accomplishes nothing. However, oddly enough, although his approach was a huge contrast to Yoast's take-charge method as an approachable, yet forceful, leader, Boone's adversarial approach with the team was successful and appropriate in such a situation. The Titans were in an environment where racial barriers needed to be broached in a forceful way to make any headway towards success. I think in such a situation, a forceful style of leadership was a benefit in managing the boys than a hindrance.

STRATEGIC VISIONING.

A good leader must have a strategic vision to provide direction and motivation for his team. Boone's strategic vision was to harness the Titan's collective energy to achieve perfection as a team and transform this drive for perfection into a collective desire to win, not only as individuals, but with each other.

" You got anger, that's good you're gonna need it, you got aggression that's even better you're gonna need that, too... Football is about controlling that anger, harnessing that aggression into a team effort to achieve perfection!"

A part of Boone's strategic vision was to demand and receive perfection from the team by harnessing their collective energy, and in most instances, their aggression for each other. He encouraged them to not use their anger against each other, but rather transform it into a vehicle to drive them to top achievement, pride and success. " Everything we gonna do is changing, we gotta change.

We gonna change the way we run, we gonna change the way we eat, we gonna change the way we block, we gonna change the way we tackle, we gonna change the way we win. It is desire. Desire!" Boone knew that, no matter what the race of the individual, the team's collective desire to win would be the glue that would hold them together, that would make them aim for perfection. He strove to achieve milestones in his strategic vision by pushing the boys, changing the way they are used to doing things as much as their team had changed from integration. In this way, he is able to challenge them, drive them to a perfection that gives them pride, hope and a desire to win that scores them a 5-0 winning streak.

Above all else, Boone makes them truly believe in themselves not as individuals, but as a team. In this way, he has effectively convinced them that his vision of achievement is possible, that they can work together and win. The best example of this was Bertier's statement to Boone before a game, " You demanded perfection. Now, I ain't sayin' Im perfect, cause I'm not and I ain't never gonna be, none of us are. But we have won every single game we have played 'til now. So, this team is...perfect. We stepped out on that field that way tonight and if it's all the same to you Coach Boone, that's how we wanna leave it." Gary's words encapsulated the moment that Boone's vision became a complete reality. The team had finally achieved perfection, not because of their 5-0 winning streak, but because of their true belief and desire to win not as individuals, but as a team.

#### COMMUNICATIONS AND TEAMWORK.

A good leader must be able to inspire his team to work together through effective communication. Boone did an exceptional job of transforming a bunch of individuals full of hate, hostility and racial tension into a productive, disciplined and synergistic team.

Boone created a structured, productive team by first forcing the team mates to mingle with their team mates of an opposite color, saying " you don't have to like each other, but you will respect each other." He knew that the wall of racism that separated the two races had to be breached with forceful direction. From the moment he ordered the boys to sit next to, room with, and learn personal facts about a player of a different color, he was breaking down the barrier that was hindering the development of a true team.

A pinnacle turning point that finally began the making of a true team occurred between the Julius and Bertier. They both came to a confrontation about players not blocking for other players of a different color, to which Julius replies " Nobody plays...I'm supposed to wear myself out for the team? What team? No, no ... I'm gonna look out for myself and get mine." At this point the Gary, the captain, realizes that the root of each player's attitude and their desire to be part of the team is reflected by leadership. After this moment, and under the guidance of Boone, Gary and Julius both work together as role models to their team members. They reveal that, to succeed, one must " trust the soul of a man rather than the look of him."

#### INTEGRITY.

A leader must possess undeniable integrity, a trait that encapsulates honesty, confidence, trustworthiness and morale. Personal integrity inspires awe and respect from followers and allows them to share in a leader's vision. Both Boone and Yoast possessed unfailing personal integrity that displayed how morale, fairness, drive and determination can lead a team to unimaginable heights.

Coach Yoast was an honest, compassionate and trustworthy man. The team, while under his leadership as head coach, always knew he had their best interests at heart. " If they sit this one out, they'll be jeopardizing their futures" was his response to the white players who informed him that they would not play under Boone when they first heard of Yoast's replacement. A moment that showed Yoast's true integrity occurred when the school board informed Yoast that the fourth Titan game was to be " fixed" by the referees



in favor of the other team, so that Boone would be fired and Yoast would be re-instated as head coach. Instead of letting the referee discriminate against the Titans, Yoast lays his job on the line, and the coveted "hall of fame", by threatening to spill the malicious intentions of the school board to the public, an action that allows the Titan's to win a fair game. His attitude towards his boys inspired deep loyalty from them and a respect that never wavered throughout the course of the movie.

Above all else, Yoast was a humble man, willing to step aside for a greater man to accomplish the job. Yoast was not bitter towards Boone about his replacement as head coach and was never above asking for Boone's help on the defensive side in the last game when he knew that everything was on the line for the Titans. Also, even with his long-standing record as a head coach, Yoast was man enough to put his ego aside and say to Boone, "I know football, but what you did with those boys...you were the right man for the job." Yoast was a man full of integrity and deserving of Boone's approval, "You're a hall of famer in my book."

Boone was a courageous, fair and honest man who stood steadfast to his morals. He was always fair with each team member, with the policy that the "best player will play, color don't matter." He was a courageous man who "marched with Dr. King", "stood toe-to-toe with the Klan" and stood up to any form of intimidation. For example, when threatened by locals who oppose the integration of the team and Boone's role as head coach, he replies with, "I don't scratch my head unless it itches and don't dance unless I hear some music. I will not be intimidated." His bravery and unwillingness

to back down in the face of harsh hostilities is a true marking of a strong leader.

Above all else, his drive and determination to win stands out as one of his most strongest element of his integrity. One may question this as an element of integrity though, since there were many instances that revealed perhaps selfishness, a personal conflict within Boone that was perhaps an ulterior motive for his taking on the team. Boone says " I did-we did-not come this far to just break down and lose now...I'm a winner, I'm going to win," to which Yoast replies " Is this even about football anymore or just about you." Yoast was suggesting that Boone had become side-tracked in his vision to win for the team, and instead had begun to use the team to win a personal battle against a society that he needed to prove himself to. Despite this, it is still fair to say that Boone's charisma and integrity was the driving force that truly inspired a team, a town, and a nation.

#### CONCLUSION.

" Remember the Titans" was a movie that truly reveals how effective leadership can inspire, motivate and cross barriers. The leadership styles of the two Titan coaches showed how the combination of a two different styles of leadership can complement each other and form a balance that allows a team to achieve ultimate success with the aid of key decision making and rightful delegation of authority. We also see how a strong strategic vision must be seen and believed in by all in the team to heighten spirit, team ability and team strength. Through it all, the personal integrity of a leader is

the 'icing on the cake' of good leadership which inspires awe and respect from followers to achieve beyond their wildest expectations.

"Remember the Titans" is not just a movie about football. With the harsh racial issues of southern America, "Remember the Titans" teaches us a lesson that under true honest, emphatic leaders, society can cross any barrier. The Titans were a shining example, and a beacon of hope, for the city of Alexandria, who, before reaching for hate, will "always, always... remember the Titans."