

# Leadership goes beyond wins and losses

BY JANN FREED

Retiring Central College football coach implements the best principles of management to inspire others.

The announcement of Ron Schipper's retirement after 36 years as a football coach at Central College in Pella has generated a profound sense of loss, not only in the football program, but in students, faculty, staff, alumni and the entire Central community.

Coach Schipper's football record is a sterling one: 36 winning seasons, a national championship, and a record of 287-67-3. But where most retiring coaches would be noted merely for this extraordinary winning record, the overwhelming response to Coach Schipper's retirement is evidence of his effectiveness as a man whose presence stretched far beyond the football field.

Coach Schipper's real legacy is that of creating leaders. His former football players march into board rooms, lecture classes, walk sidelines. Or, as in the case of David Hays, a 1965 graduate and artistic director of the Center Repertory Theater Company in San Diego, direct plays.

To a man, they say it was Coach Schipper who instilled in them the integrity necessary for success. It was Schipper who taught them that the ability to lead begins with the heart.

"He epitomizes everything you want in a leader," said Grant Teaff, executive director of the American Football Coaches Association. "Based on my interactions with him as a member of the association, as a member of the board and as president of the association, I have tremendous admiration for him as a person, a coach and a leader."

Schipper won by emphasizing teamwork and preparation, not by humiliating, embarrassing or downgrading players. His unusual recruiting style focused on priorities and relationships. Schipper



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used football as a vehicle for teaching his beliefs.

To Del Miller of the class of 1972, Coach Schipper was instrumental in teaching him that football is a profession of relationships. As a football coach himself, he has continued to pass on the intangible values he obtained while playing for Coach Schipper: integrity, discipline, work ethic

and trust.

"I have been in the profession of coaching for 25 years, and I still can't call him Ron," Miller says. "Because of my deep respect, he will always be Coach Schipper to me."

As a graduate of Central College myself and a faculty member for 15 years, I also have had the opportunity to observe Coach Schipper in action. I agree with the recent comment of former Central College President Arend Lubbers, currently president of Grand Valley State University: "You can't find anyone better than Coach Schipper as a role model for young people."

"People are his real legacy, not all of his wins," says Brad Van Vark, class of 1978. "It is the people he has touched that makes the difference."

Coach Schipper exits the playing field at Central College with a legacy of wins, more than almost any active coach at any level. But most important, Coach Schipper leaves Central as a winning coach with a legacy of players who have become leaders. Leaders who are teaching others that "Schipper football" isn't a game, but a way of life. Though it will be hard to imagine what it will be like without him, because of his legacy of leadership, we never really will. ■

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