

MY FAVORITE TEACHER
BROKE MY NOSE
— TWICE!



The Game Within the Game —
Adversity Is a Surprisingly Good Teacher

Jerry Hocutt

"This book is a must read for coaches, players, fellow students, parents, and educators to fully understand the benefits of our great game. This book reinforced the things I have preached daily to our players for over 40 years of coaching...17 state championships and 486 wins later." - Gary Rankin, Head Football Coach, Boyd-Buchanan School, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 2024 National High School Hall of Fame, Winningest High School Football Coach in Tennessee History

This book is a must read for coaches, players, fellow students, parents, and educators to fully understand the benefits of our great game. This book reinforced the things I have preached daily to our players for over 40 years of coaching: Leadership, resilience, teamwork, and my favorite – mental toughness. All are key life skills that transfer from the playing field to our daily lives. From the 17 state championships and 486 wins later, these lessons are as true today as they were 40 years ago. Congratulations Jerry on a great read!

Gary Rankin

*Head Football Coach
2024 National High School Hall of Fame
2011 TSSAA Hall of Fame and Winningest High School Football
Coach in Tennessee History
Boyd-Buchanan School
Chattanooga, Tennessee*

Through humor, great stories, and quotes, Jerry has created a book that helps me reflect on why I went into education and the coaching profession over 40 years ago. This book helps remind me of the great people in my life that helped develop my character, my passion to help others, my integrity to do the right thing all the time, and to continue to learn and grow throughout life.

Ken Potter

*37 Years Head Football Coach
Oregon's All-Time Winningest High School Football Coach
Four State Championships with Over 350 Wins
Jesuit High School
Portland, Oregon*

Outstanding book with tons of stuff related to learning, character development and doing things the right way. The benefits of sports and specifically football, like "Every game is a challenge of will, stress, belief, courage, decision-making, change, discipline, success, failure, disappointment, frustration and hope." Doing things the right way has helped us win 14 state titles.

Jim Roth

*40 Years Head Coach
Pennsylvania's All-Time Winningest Football Coach
2022 Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame
2023 PIAA District IV Hall of Fame
2020 Max-Preps Small School National Coach of the Year
2020 Max-Preps Small School National Champions
Southern Columbia High School
Catawissa, Pennsylvania*

I have been a coach for 51 years. The legacy will not be how many games I have won, but that the players and coaches will be better people for being involved in the game. Everyone wants to win, but everyone doesn't want to do what it takes to win. I have never worked a day - hope you can say the same.

Terry Curtis

*Athletic Director/Head Football Coach
Alabama High School Sports Hall of Fame
2023 National High School Football Coach of the Year
Winningest High School Football Coach in Alabama History
Eight Times State Champions
UMS-Wright Preparatory School
Mobile, Alabama*

A great read for any Coach, educator or parent to understand that Sports is more than a scholarship!

Gary Joseph

*Athletic Coordinator/Head Coach
Texas High School Football Hall of Fame
Five Times 6A State Champions
2012 National Champions
2012 National High School Football Coach of the Year
Katy High School
Katy, Texas*

Your book's stories and quotes should be read by every player (and their parents) who play the greatest team game in the world...football. Football teaches/demands what every Fortune 500 company in the world desires: Toughness. Teamwork. Loyalty. Competition. Family. Faith.

John Hart

*Head Coach
IHSFCA Hall of Fame
Brownsburg High School
Brownsburg, Indiana*

Football is much more than just a game! Instilling perseverance, accountability, work ethic, discipline & confidence are a few of the characteristics that players will carry with them long after their playing days are over. These are traits that we discuss daily.

Richard Barrett

*Athletic Director/Head Coach
Kennedale High School
Kennedale, Texas*

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My Favorite Teacher
Broke My Nose
– **Twice!**

The Game Within the Game –
Adversity Is a Surprisingly Good Teacher

Jerry Hocutt



Chugwater Publishing

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First printing 2025

Hocutt, Jerry

My Favorite Teacher Broke My Nose – Twice!: The Game Within the Game – Adversity Is a Surprisingly Good Teacher

1st Edition

The book's subtitle has been revised. All content remains the same and has been unchanged.

Paperback:

- ISBN 9798307027493
- Library of Congress Control Number 2025900759

Hardcover:

- ISBN 9798307027998
- Library of Congress Control Number 2025901963

Ebook available on Amazon.com

1. Sports 2. Self-help 3. Humor 4. Psychology 5. Business
II. Hocutt, Jr., Jerry E. III. Title

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See details at back of book or contact Jerry Hocutt at
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www.OurChallengesOurTeachers.com

Knowing most people would rather slice the tip of their thumb off on the razor-sharp kitchen mandoline* than read a book, I've removed as many words as I can.

The ones left have lots of white space around them to keep the ideas and benchwarmer humor from colliding with each other.

Therefore, this book should take less than an hour to read. Two if you move your lips while reading.

— Jerry Hocutt

*(Yep, did that too.)

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Dog Catches Car

Now what?

Like the triumphant car-chasing dog, what do you do once you've reached your goal?

If the dog could talk he would tell you why he wanted to catch the car, what he did to catch the car, what he learned from catching it, what he understands now about catching cars, and what he will tell his pals who can only dream of catching cars.

(This dog is, of course, a male. The female of the species is too smart to chase cars. Her only thought is, "Idiot! What are you thinking?")

Women can do anything men can do, but are smart enough not to.

– Cal FitzSimmons

When you reach one goal do you mindlessly start chasing the next without taking the time to discover and apply the lessons you learned along the way? Without sharing those lessons to help others?

In football you make the team. You letter. Win some games. Maybe you're a starter. The BMO. The captain. You win accolades.

You've accomplished your goals. Now what? What have you learned? What do you understand about what you've learned?

What did you take from those grueling, summer two-a-days? What about the practice's one-on-one challenges? The

bruising scrimmages? The injuries you suffered? Your parents' concerns? The friendships made?

What did you learn about yourself, your teammates, your coaches, and your competitors with each game you won or lost?

Every coach has told me and my teammates that someday we “can use what the game has taught us” to make our lives better.

But they never told us *how* to find or use what we were learning.

How do we figure it out? When will we figure it out? Today? Tomorrow? Next week? Next year? Decades from now? Will it be by accident? Luck? Necessity?

This book is not about X's and O's and tackle football. Everything here applies to flag football, baseball, basketball, volleyball, tennis, swimming, golf, gymnastics, track and field, soccer, wrestling, lacrosse, cheerleading – any sport.

This book is about the game. The *game* is the teacher, just as the *chase* teaches the dog.

This is a book about *understanding* and applying what you learn in the moment to make your life richer.

Here are three steps you can use to understand what the game is teaching you:

1. Recall an event, a situation, or a goal.
2. What did you learn as you were playing?
3. What do you understand now; and how can you apply it to improve your life?

Here are some of the lessons the game teaches that are covered in this book:

The elephant in the room...should I allow my kids to play? • How taking risks makes you the most interesting person in the room. • How to get your competitors to reveal their secrets. • How to escalate the learning experience without saying a word. • How fear increases your chances for survival. • A magician's one sentence command helps you get what you want. • Imagine if you will...how to give instructions to your subconscious mind. • A 2000-year old Chinese tactic helps you to reach your goals. • How to change someone's mind who doesn't "give a rip". • Where you fit in the four levels of competence. • Why what you wear determines your attitude and how you talk, think, and act and how you're perceived by others.

You don't have to play football, sports, or even like sports to use the lessons in this book.

They're quick, simple, fun, and they work. They are intended for all people of all ages.

THIS 
IS WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN YOU PLAY WITHOUT A HELMET

When I played pro football,
I never set out to *hurt* anyone
deliberately –

unless it was,
you know,
important,
like a league game
or something.

– *Dick Butkus*

The Elephant in the Room

It's always better to like doing something than to be instantly good at it. If you're successful but hate the process, you'll stop doing it. If you suck, but the work intrigues you, you'll keep at it and get better.

– Nell Scovell

My parents thought I was a crash test dummy

Six concussions*, five teeth kicked out or broken, two broken noses requiring surgeries by plastic surgeons, stitches in my head, face, and arm, and twisted ankles, black eyes, and dislocated fingers.

It could be that your sole purpose in life is to simply serve as a warning to others.

– Unknown

In a heartbeat!

Would I do it all over again?

**These occurred between 1961-1966 before concussions were seriously studied and we were taught to use our heads as a weapon in blocking and tackling. In my sophomore year at Cisco Junior College when I had my sixth concussion, in our homecoming game, our team doctor met with me the next day while I was still recovering in the hospital. He said that “there is little research into concussion studies at this time. But this one, on top of your other five, plus the head injury you had when younger that put you in a 3-day coma, is too dangerous for you to ever play again. I’ve told your coach I’ve revoked your medical clearance to play.” I was devastated. But looking back decades later, and after seeing all the research on concussions and seeing all the rule changes to increase player safety, I will be forever grateful to Dr. Addy for his foresight and decision until the unknown became better known.*

The situation

Every parents' elephant-in-the-room angst: Should I let my kids play football?

What I learned then

Playing is a family's decision as they continue gathering safety information and talking with their athlete to determine their desire to play, because sports is more than having talent, size, and speed.

The critical question to answer is "*Why* do you want to play?"

If it's anything other than you *love* the *process* of playing the game, then you have your answer.

Do they love playing the game?

- New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick's first question he asks a college coach when considering drafting one of his players

What I understand now

Researcher Malcolm Gladwell found that to be an expert in your calling generally takes about 10,000 hours of practice and work in that field.

No singer or band fills stadiums full of adoring fans without having put in the countless hours and years mastering their performances and traveling the world. No surgeon is at the top of their profession without years spent in study and operating rooms.

Athletes, actors, artists, educators, writers, engineers, architects, software developers, and scientists agree that you have to be dedicated to the grinding practice if you want to be among the best.

If you don't love the process for acquiring the skills you need, if you can't bear the failures and disappointments, if you can't endure the pain, then you'll never be happy and you'll fail to reach the level of expertise your profession demands.

What football teaches

Love the process. That's the "it" factor that separates those who excel in any activity.

If I can write and sing, I'll make records, even if just for myself.

– Paul Simon

the PLAYBOOK

coin toss: To determine first possession to start the game. Instead of leaving it to a 50-50 chance of a coin flip, why not depend upon the players' skills to determine the team that controls the call? For example, the winner of Rock, Paper, Scissors?

THIS
IS WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN YOU PLAY WITHOUT A HELMET



Watching her is like watching a moose
on roller skates:

Never particularly graceful, but certainly
riveting to watch.

- Mark McKinnon

Will

I can't want it for him.

- Don Wakamatsu, Seattle Mariners manager, on returning player who showed up for spring training forty pounds over target weight, showed no desire to participate in off-season conditioning, and was in jeopardy of losing his job.

He did.

First sign of failure?

You have an answer to this question: What are you *not* willing to do to succeed?

Where games – and jobs – are won and lost

The *will* to prepare, your behavior, is your edge over your competitors. It's your *will* to do whatever it takes that scares them.

Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it.

– Lou Holtz

The situation

Whatever it took to play the game, most of our teammates were willing to pay the price.

Most. Not all.

What I learned then

Many want to be on the field of play. But for some, the price to play is too high.

Some lack the self-restraint to stop doing things that are harmful to their bodies that make them weaker.

Some refuse to participate in off-season training to make themselves better.

Some fail to work to keep passing grades.

Some are unteachable; they're not willing to listen, to change.

Some feel entitled and they don't have to put in the work.

What I understand now

Players are measured by their practices and off-season preparations. Two gauges of where their minds and bodies are.

When players take to the practice field in summer and spring tryouts the coaches aren't looking for ordinary players. They're a known. The ones who do the minimum to get by. The pretenders.

Coaches are looking for players who knuckle down and prepare as if every play, every game depended on them. They take the responsibility for making things happen. They're the ones who step to the front of the line to take on any challenge. Who are willing to mentor and encourage their teammates.

Team players are the first to do the hard things. They volunteer. They sacrifice. They don't whine. They are relentless in their pursuit of becoming better each day, on every play.

You have to practice in the face of resistance. Otherwise, when the times get hard you won't be able to handle it.

– Tom Brady

What football teaches

It's your will that your competitors (teammates and opponents) are trying to take away from you so they can beat you.

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quarterback scramble: When defensive players become as excited in capturing their prey as lions are when cornering theirs on the Serengeti Plain.

THIS 
IS WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN YOU PLAY WITHOUT A HELMET

"What do you think of your team's execution?" the reporter asked.

"I'm all for it."

- Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach John McKay's response to the question about his team's dismal showing

Competition

It isn't the other person we are defeating; it is simply a matter of overcoming the obstacles he presents.

– Timothy Gallwey, *The Inner Game of Tennis*

It was like getting mauled by a tiger

Every down was a no-holds-barred street fight. Neither of us gave an inch until the play was blown dead.

A lesson I could learn no other way

Mike Salmon was the middle guard and toughest competitor I'd face until college.

And he was my teammate and friend I scrimmaged against in every practice even though we only played together for a year.

Mike taught me that if you want to get better, you have to compete against those who are better than you.

The situation

Mike was a punishing defender. The best. Period. No contest. He made me look forward to game days where the competition would never be as tough.

Leaving the practice field many days after some brutal battles, the coaches would catch up with us as we headed to the locker room to check and see if any permanent damage was done – and if we were still friends.

Permanent damage? Close. Friends? Always.

What I learned then

Go up against the best, even if you don't stand a chance.

The upside is that your opponents, without being aware of it, are teaching you their secrets for how they do what they do.

They're teaching you the changes you need to make so you can counteract. They're teaching you to be creative to better deal with the mayhem.

What I understand now

Competing against the best is the shortcut to improving your skills, whether it's in school, sports, or business.

Compete with your teammates. They'll often become your mentors.

Compete with your opponents.

Who's better than you? Challenge them. Learn their secret techniques.

Competition exposes your mistakes. Mistakes that must be corrected if you want to advance.

Competition tests your will to pay the price to win.

Competition tests your courage.

Competition teaches you how to handle fear and failure as well as success.

What football teaches

Every play, every situation, is both a lesson and a test.

What did you learn? How did you deal with it? How will you use what you learned when you're challenged again?

Identify your best competitors and their strengths and then figure out how you will beat them.

– Kobe Bryant

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fumble: When players are first schooled in legal matters. Possession is nine-tenths of the law.

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THIS
IS WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN YOU PLAY WITHOUT A HELMET



My **unstable** and *bitchy* personality is
part of my mystique.

- Unknown

Do Things That Excite You

Attraction + Obstacles = Excitement

– Jack Morin

Perverse motivation?

Every practice, every game had its challenges. Mistakes were made. New plays that looked good on paper, failed on the field. Bad calls were made. Injuries, illnesses, and bad grades sidelined players. Opponents came up with surprising ways to stop us. Texas torrential rains and thunderstorms altered our game plans.

Meeting those challenges head-on and finding ways to deal with them tested us and (perversely?) made the game that much more exciting and fun. Backed into a corner we were forced to come up with new and creative solutions.

Motivation: threats v. excitement

Threats motivate. But the motivation is short-lived. Just long enough to get you through the crisis.

However, when you do things that excite you, things that are fun, you never want to stop, no matter how difficult the challenges.

Fun motivates. The more fun you have, the more you do. The more you do, the quicker you learn. The quicker you learn, the better you get. And you're never discouraged when you're having fun.

If we're not having fun, then I'm screwing up.

– Pete Carroll, Seattle Seahawks

The situation

Every team loves to run a trick play. Practicing it adds fun and excitement to the week's practice with anticipation to see if it works game day.

We had a play one week where I blocked the tackle over our left guard. After taking my quick snap the quarterback dropped the ball behind the legs of the guard at the line of scrimmage and then faked a lateral to the running back on a sweep.

While I was occupying the guard's defender, he turned and picked the ball up at his feet and made a sixty-yard dash up the middle before the opponents could ever locate the missing pigskin. The longest run in the game.

What I learned then

Do things that excite you.

When you're having fun, no challenge is too tough, no failure is too devastating, and no disappointment will stop you.

You persist because you're doing what you love. You're finding new ways to change, new ways to adapt to deal with whatever confronts you. You discover new and better answers.

What I understand now

Challenges have a purpose: They exist to make your life more exciting, not miserable. Better, not worse.

Competitive sports is a challenge because your opponent is pulling out all the stops to beat you. Learning to drive is a challenge because you're having to learn how to multi-task without wrecking your parents' car. First-time dating is a challenge because you're completely clueless. Teaching and coaching are challenges because you're dealing with assorted personalities, unexpected events, and fluid situations.

But everything you choose to pursue at any cost is because it's something you love to do. It can be sports. Art. Music. Acting. Medicine. Being an astronaut. A beekeeper. A stand-up comedian. Whatever excites you.

Conversely, how do you know when to quit and move on? When the love is no longer there. When the excitement is gone.

What football teaches

Find what excites you. Use the obstacles to motivate you. You'll find you can't wait to start every new day.

The unknown puts adventure into life. The unexpected around the corner gives a sense of anticipation and surprise.

– E. Stanley Jones

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go for it: It's the offensive team's last-ditch desperation play hoping to keep the drive alive. It's your best friend egging you on to ask the star player's recent "ex" out for a date.

THIS 
IS WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN YOU PLAY WITHOUT A HELMET

I have always believed that writing
ADVERTISEMENTS is the second
most profitable form of writing.

The first, of course, is

r@n\$om notes.

– *Philip Dusenberry*

Educate

There is no education like adversity.

– Benjamin Disraeli

8 seconds of hell on the one-eyed Prince of Darkness

You learn how to ride rodeo bulls by getting thrown off the bulls.

It may hurt, but there is no other way

A professional bull rider can show you how to *ride* a bull, but *you* have to *learn how to stay on the bull*.

To truly understand a thing, you first have to fail at doing it.

You cannot really understand something unless you can explain it to your grandmother.

– Unknown

The situation

At practice our line coach, Ed Logan, called our offensive line together, with the exception of one of our tackles, to a secret huddle.

“Don’t block on the next three plays,” he said. “Let the defense rush through to the quarterback.”

This particular tackle was a sieve at pass blocking. The quarterback was under intense pressure on every play.

The backfield coach, Ed Nowlin, pulled the big guy aside and told him that for the next series of downs he was going to play quarterback to see what it was like.

With our defense being told to bull-rush all eleven players and that our offensive line wasn’t going to block, they had a field day. Our tackle-quarterback was smothered in the backfield before he could find the laces on the ball.

What I learned then

You can be told what to do. Read what to do. Hear what to do. Watch what to do. Or do it.

Understanding, that *Ah-Ha!* moment, comes in the doing.

What I understand now

When words seem to drift off into la-la land, escalate learning through experience. Timothy Gallwey, in his book *The Inner Game of Tennis*:

Verbal instruction can be passing. It lives in the mind totally disconnected from experience. But muscle memory, the doing, carries a more complete knowledge of the desired action. For the teacher or coach, the question has to be how to give instructions in such a way as to help the natural learning process of the student and not interfere with it.

Want your blockers to block? Let them experience gang tackling. Want to learn how to play golf? Learn from your hundreds of errant drives and putts. Want to be a baker? Learn from your cakes that flop. Want to be an entrepreneur? Learn how to develop courage through fear.

What football teaches

Failure doesn't mean to stop. It doesn't mean you can't do it. It doesn't mean there is no answer. It simply means you haven't found the right combination yet.

Hang in there. Keep trying. Every failure yields new answers and moves you closer.

the **PLAYBOOK**

scrimmage: Intrasquad practices where teammates challenge teammates. There will be name-calling, threats, deception, taunting, innuendos, rumors, and occasional fist-cuffs. You know, like family gatherings during the holidays.

THIS 
IS WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN YOU PLAY WITHOUT A HELMET

**COACH PETE CARROLL
DECLARES ALL POSITIONS
OPEN TO COMPETITION.**

**SEAHAWKS
FLOODED WITH
UNEMPLOYED COACHES'
APPLICATIONS.**

– Ray Wilson

Winning

I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.

– Michael Jordan

The rose

I played because it was fun. I loved the game. It made me happy.

What's money? A man is a success if he gets up in the morning and gets to bed at night and in between does what he wants to do.

– Bob Dylan

Roses can't exist without their thorns

The sweat. The disappointments. The hardships. The failures. The difficulties. The injuries. The losses. The fears. The adversities.

The greatest moments of your life are the most difficult ones. That's the only time you learn.

– Mandy Patinkin

The situation

We had too many close games that we lost by a handful of points.

What I learned then

We were disappointed in the outcomes, but we were never disappointed in playing the game.

What I understand now

This poem by Chinese philosopher Chaung Tzu has been on my wall for four decades.

*When an archer is shooting for nothing, he has all
his skills,
If he shoots for a brass buckle, he is already nervous...
The prize divides him.
He cares.
He thinks more of winning than of shooting – and
the need to win
Drains him of power.*

The archer's goal is not to hit the bulls-eye with every shot. The goal is to *become the archer* who can hit the bulls-eye with every shot. There's only pressure when he feels he needs to control the outcome.

By shooting for the love of it, the archer becomes better because he learns more about himself and more about what it takes to master the skill. The target is a measurement of growth; how far he has come and how much further he has to go.

What football teaches

Winners are winners because they *love what they do*. They don't let the score define them.

About Jerry Hocutt

Jerry is an author and a retired national speaker and business owner living with his wife in Kent, Washington.

BTW and FYI: This really is what happens when you play without a helmet.

Senior year 1963, I broke my left nasal bone and cartilages in a scrimmage game against Paschal High School in Ft. Worth. Actually, I was wearing my helmet with face mask while making a tackle. Think this is bad, you should see the guy I tackled! Second time I broke it.



The first time was my sophomore year 1961 (same identical look, pain, and surgery by plastic surgeon with what must have been ten yards of gauze rammed up my nose!), but right nasal bone and cartilages broken this time as we were practicing in the gym without our helmets.

Thought of putting a recent photo here, but the family said, “Nah, that’s about the best you’ll ever look.”

It's Your Call

Share with others what coaches want players, students, parents, and educators to know: Why players play, coaches coach, and how their experiences can help their fans.



My Favorite Teacher Broke My Nose – Twice! is available in paperback at *special wholesale prices* for bulk purchases. Give them as gifts. Great for fundraising. Sell them in your school store or at your football camps. Put them in your school library.

Through humor, great stories, and quotes, Jerry has created a book that helps me reflect on why I went into education and the coaching profession over 40 years ago. – **Ken Potter, Oregon's All-Time Winningest High School Football Coach** with over 350 wins, 4 State Championships, Jesuit High School, Portland, Oregon

Outstanding book with tons of stuff related to learning, character development, and doing things the right way. Doing things the right way has helped us win 14 state titles. – **Jim Roth, 40 Years Head Coach, Pennsylvania's All-Time Winningest Football Coach**, Southern Columbia High School, Catawissa, Pennsylvania

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