
Interview With Tony DeMeo

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Tony DeMeo

ABOUT THE COACH

Tony DeMeo is the head football coach at the University of Charleston (WV), a position he assumed in 2005. Before that, he served three seasons (2002-04) as the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at the University of Richmond, a position he assumed in 2002. Previously, he served a very successful stint as the head football coach at Washburn University from 1994-2001. His more than three decades of coaching experience also includes coaching stints at Pace, Iona, Penn, Mercyhurst, Temple, Delaware, James Madison, and Massachusetts. DeMeo is widely renowned as being one of the most knowledgeable and innovative offensive coaches in the game.

Q *How did you first get into coaching?*

TD George Maier, for whom I played at Iona College under head coach Ben Bedini, hired me when he became the head coach at Pace University. All factors considered, it was a great experience. My days at Pace also allowed me to learn a lot by being around Bill Arnsperger and his New York Giants staff, who trained at Pace.

Q *What has been the biggest change in football since you started coaching?*

TD The technology available in the video world has eliminated any secrets. Nowadays, every one knows what you do. As such, it comes down to how well you teach it and how well your players can execute what you taught them.

Q *What advice would you give a young coach who is just starting out?*

TD All young coaches should work on mastering the game. They should start with their position first and learn every detail of what they are teaching. They should always be attentive, listen to, and observe other coaches. Finally, young coaches should think for themselves, hopefully outside the box wherever appropriate.

Q *What is the most rewarding aspect of coaching for you?*

TD The most rewarding aspect of coaching is seeing young men leave the program with a degree and go on to make a positive contribution to society. The boys-to-men transformation is extremely satisfying to me.

Q *Who's the greatest football player you've ever seen in person?*

TD I had the opportunity and privilege of seeing Gale Sayers, Walter Payton, and Joe Montana play, all of whom are (were) exceptional athletes. Frankly, it's hard to pick just one.

Q *What's the most challenging aspect of coaching?*

TD For me, the most challenging aspect of coaching is to take over 100 egos and sell these young men on a "we-not-me" approach to the game. I also want my players to play with class, rather than for an ESPN moment. Unfortunately, the NFL has not always been a good model for sportsmanship and class in that regard.

Q *What coach has had the most impact on your career?*

TD Ben Bedini, my college coach really got me interested in coaching. Harry Gamble, for whom I worked at Penn, taught me how to be organized and how to run a football program. Tubby Raymond and his longtime assistant, Ted Kempfski, influenced my strategic thinking. I also had the opportunity to spend some time with the late Bill Walsh, who helped me refine my thoughts on the passing game and game planning. In 1973, I visited spring practice at the University of Texas, where I had the fortune to discuss the wishbone with Darrell Royal. Truth be known, every coach I've listened to at a clinic has given me an idea or two that has helped me over the years.

Q *What do you look for when hiring an assistant?*

TD I look for an individual who has a sincere passion for the game. He must love football and be loyal. As in all things, character counts. Today's players, as the saying goes, are looking for a model—not a motto. I want my staff to set a positive example in everything that they do.

Q *Do you think defenses will ever catch up with the spread?*

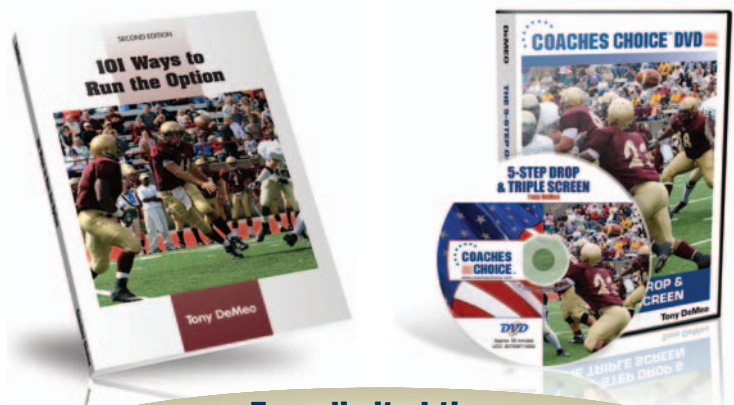
TD I think offenses and defenses are constantly evolving. Frankly, however, when all is said and done, the game comes down to blocking and tackling. For example, our triple gun offense evolved from the flexbone, which evolved from the wishbone, and so on.

Q *What would you like your coaching legacy to be?*

TD I would like my coaching legacy to be for all my players to say “I got a great education, I played great football, Coach DeMeo treated me fairly, and I would play for him again.” 🍌

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