

Elite Journey: Lead with Joy

Michigan schools who have used Elite Journey Books either for their classes, teams, coaches, or leadership teams:

Rochester Stoney Creek High School
Novi High School
Northville High School
Detroit Loyola High School
Walled Lake Northern High School
Brighton High School
Troy High School
Corunna High School
Livonia Stevenson High School
Livonia Churchill High School
Livonia Franklin High School
Royal Oak Middle School

I want to thank all the Michigan athletic programs who have been using the [Elite Journey books](#). I have enjoyed speaking to many different teams, coaches, and athletic directors throughout the state of Michigan. One of the many blessings has been my association with the [Michigan Elite 25](#) (E25) program founded by [Mr. Tim McCormick](#) and [Mr. Mike Dietz](#). I was hired as their leadership/education director and have learned so much from working with them. The mission of **E25** is to change the culture of basketball in Detroit and throughout the state of Michigan by encouraging the top players to create a winning game plan for success. Along with helping develop outstanding basketball players, this mentoring program emphasizes educational topics, community values, family relationships, and the importance of creating a long-term plan of success, both on and off the court.

Throughout the state, I have been so impressed with the talented athletes, professional coaching, and opportunities that athletes have - to become the best they can possibly be. The cutting edge coaching, exposure to college coaches, high-end training, and mindset advantages - are not only noteworthy but should be celebrated. I believe there has never been a better time to be a high school student-athlete.

Though as exciting as it is for our young athletes, I honestly believe (without hyperbole) that - in the history of sports - there has never been a more difficult time to be a coach. The challenges of coaching the [Z generation](#) or the expectations of parents from the [X generation](#) are complex and full of mixed messages. The concept of delayed gratification and the sense of rooting for a fellow teammate's success have dwindled. Also, parents tend to be more skeptical, less trusting, and more likely to see coaching decisions through the prism of their own child, rather than the benefit of the team or athletic department.

Coaches are now on the public stage more than ever. A coach's body language, interactions with athletes, and conversations with officials can instantly be posted to a social media outlet - characterizing the exchange with bias or lack of context. Demanding coaches encourage their athletes beyond their comfort zone (which is a demanding process), yet are often questioned not on the coach's intent, but on the athletes' or parents' interpretation. I recently had a conversation with a high school referee who said, "As tough as I have it every game, at least I get to go home and do not have to deal with all those headaches the next day. No way I would want to coach." How did we get to a point where the referees feel sorry for coaches?

Though coaches are often misunderstood, under intense scrutiny, and occasionally undervalued - I still believe there is not a more satisfying profession than coaching. I was recently reminded of Reverend Billy Graham's quote in a conversation I had not long ago, ***"A coach will impact more people in one year than the average person will in an entire lifetime."***

Through my work with Michigan Elite 25, I have connected with Coach Dan Young, who is an **E25** coach and Executive Director of [BCAM](#). He recently told me of a story of his encounter with a young doctor. When the doctor heard Dan was a coach, the doctor thoughtfully said, and I am paraphrasing, "You know, I played for an unbelievable high school coach. He was tough and smart and I learned so much from him. In fact, much of my success, I owe to the lessons I learned from him." When Coach Young asked who his coach was, the young doctor replied, "Coach Ernie Righetti, from Bloomfield Hills Roper." Incidentally, Coach Righetti was recently inducted to the BCAM Hall of Fame.

Whether it is Billy Graham's quote or stories like Coach Young's - coaches have to keep their purpose at the forefront of their challenges. Through my readings, research, or observations - it is becoming more clear to me that coaches need to show more of the joy of their chosen profession. All the [research](#) is in - optimistic, positive, and joyful people win. They have better relationships, are more successful in their jobs, and serve as a better example for others.

A joyful mindset does not trivialize the serious challenges coaches face today - though it helps connect to something larger - a deeper purpose. This is not being phony - it is simply allowing for people to see how much you enjoy your profession and rejoice in working with young people. Joyfulness allows for a coach's circumstance to enlarge them - not define them.

Too often coaches are seen as grumpy, unsatisfied, or just too negative. Though this attitude may have worked with prior generations, or still with a few, select, often elite (self-motivated) athletes - this mindset does not connect with most of

the current athletes or parent generation. One mental exercise you might consider is asking yourself, "If I were videotaped during a game or practice -without sound - What would the viewer see? What would I be [communicating](#)? Would they see a joyful warrior - a master at their craft?"

[Joyfulness](#) is different than happiness. Happiness is conditioned on happenstance, such as: Did we have a good practice? Did we play well? Did we win? In other words, happiness is conditional. Joyfulness springs from something deeper - a spirit of gratefulness. Yes, coaching is challenging, yet - if this is your calling, why not do it better than it has ever been done before? Despite your team's situation, be joyful, so your players, athletic director, and community see that your purpose is larger than your circumstance.

What if you let people see the joy and passion you have for coaching? What if you were able to bring out the joy in others as well. One of my favorite quotes is from Mother Teresa- ***"Never let anyone leave your presence without them feeling a little bit better."*** A great coach is a bridge builder - taking people places they could not go by themselves.

I wish you all nothing but joy and good fortune as the regular season concludes and the preparation and excitement of the state tournament commences. If you would like to find out more information about my [Elite Journey](#) series or how to use them with your team, please view my website at michaelfmassucci.com or purchase them more easily on [Amazon](#). For team discounts please email me at coachmassucci@gmail.com I also encourage you to follow me on twitter [@coachmassucci](#) [#elitejourney](#) or Sign Up for the **Elite Journey Book Club** by receiving quotes from my book series through one-way text messages.

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