

A close-up portrait of a middle-aged man with light brown hair, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark blue collared shirt. The background is a gradient of dark blue to light blue.

Chuck Kyle

started his Ignatius career
returned to mentor scores of athletes
championships in two sports, and is now
It's easy to see that he's

as a star tailback in the late '60s, spent only three years away [at a Jesuit institution], that have attained success at every level, had two ball fields named after him, won state celebrating the longest coaching career in Saint Ignatius history.

in it for The Long Run

When Chuck Kyle '69 makes a decision, he sticks with it.

As he recalls it though, there was little time to make a decision when Athletic Director John Wirtz asked him to be the head coach for track and field 32 years ago. He had come to Saint Ignatius that day to sign his first teaching contract when he passed his former football coach in the hallway.

"Wirtz said to me, 'Chico, do you want to be the track coach?' I don't think I ever said 'no' to that man," Kyle reflects.

Fresh out of John Carroll University with a Bachelor of Arts in English, Kyle says he didn't know anything about coaching track. Although he was a sprinter in high school, Kyle knew that experience wasn't enough, so he read books and studied how to coach track and field before the season began.

Today Kyle, 54, could write the book on coaching. In fact, he did. With the help of fellow English teacher Mark Hodermarsky, Kyle published *The Object of the Game* in 1997. Since then, the book has been printed twice and sold nearly 3,000 copies. It is also required reading for the school's Summer Enrichment Program.

Although it touches on some coaching techniques, the book focuses more on the power of motivation with chapter headings such as enthusiasm, pride, faith and commitment, to name a few. For Kyle, these words are not mere chapter titles; they represent how he coaches, teaches and lives his life.

In the history of the school, no one has coached as long as Kyle. And no one has come close to his level of success. Since 1988, five years after Kyle became head varsity football coach, his teams have captured two national championship titles and nine Ohio

Division I State Championship titles, the most recent in 2001. Ohio Associated Press named him coach of the year in 1988 and 1989, and *USA Today* recognized him as National Coach of the Year in 1989 and 1993. In 2001, he received three more coach-of-the-year awards, the same year his underdog team managed to earn a state crown after four losses in the regular season. His career record is 234 wins, 50 losses and one tie.

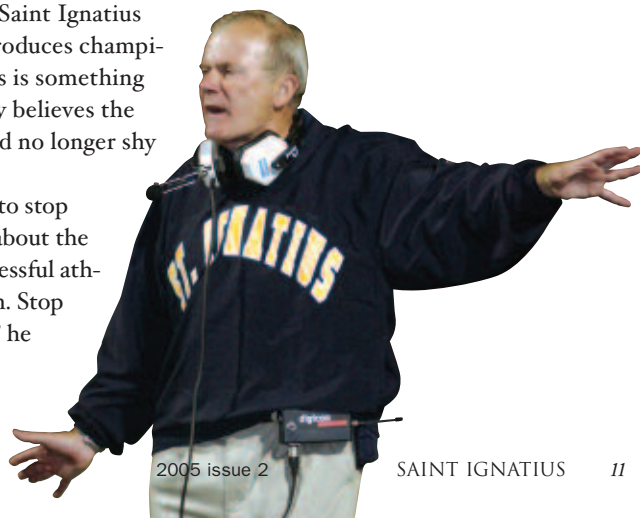
"No one in Ohio can compare to those numbers," says Dale Gabor '66. "Cincinnati Moeller is the only other school that can come close." Gabor should know. He began working as the school's athletic director the same year Kyle took the job as head football coach.

The accolades, however, are not just in football. In track, his teams have earned 23 district championships, seven regional titles and one Ohio Division I State Championship, besting 750 teams in Ohio. Last spring, his team was the state runner-up.

It is because of Kyle that Saint Ignatius has earned the reputation of a football powerhouse. It is also one of the reasons the school has enjoyed a steady increase in student applicants since the late '80s.

The fact that young men are attracted to Saint Ignatius because it produces championship teams is something Kyle strongly believes the school should no longer shy away from.

"We need to stop apologizing about the school's successful athletic program. Stop apologizing," he emphasizes. "Embrace it."



Kyle



Chuck Kyle has coached many athletes who have gone on to pursue successful careers in sports. One of his former athletes, Tim Mack '90, won a 2004 Olympic gold medal in pole vault.

Sports is part of academics. Those who look closely will see the work ethic... An alumnus who says we shouldn't be sports-minded should come down and take a look. If I ever thought it was a negative for the school, I would stop what I do."

Gabor says he sees the impact Kyle has on athletes. "Chico is the finest motivator I have ever seen... He's not a screamer. He treats the kids like men and teaches them the fundamentals. He helps the kids get better. Good coaches are good teachers."

Nick Restifo, varsity offensive coach, has worked with Kyle for 25 years. He says, "Chuck has an ability to deal with kids, and he delegates authority [to his assistant coaches] without trying to take it back."

But it's not just the football players and his assistant coaches that Kyle has motivated over the years. His success has encouraged other coaches and teams. "He has set the benchmark for the entire athletic program," Gabor says. "Every team here sets its sights and goals on a state championship. It all started with football."

To date, Saint Ignatius has earned a state championship in each of the nine sports sanctioned in Ohio and collected 20 titles, the latest as national champions in soccer.

For Kyle, it's not about the records, titles and awards. In fact he says he doesn't track his wins and losses from year to year and admits to checking his coach's bio when pressed for numbers. It is probably this approach that helps Kyle cope with the high expectations alumni, parents, fans and sports writers place upon him every fall.

"Nothing positive can

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— DALE GABOR '66, Athletic Director

come from worrying. It's most important that I focus on teaching the game and teaching it right. We'll win more than our share if we do that," he says.

Ending his 2005 season with a 5-5 record and an abbreviated post-season, Kyle is not agonizing over what could have been. Instead he's looking forward to next year's football season and keeping busy with a schedule that includes preparing for final grade reports, meeting with college recruiters and trying to squeeze in time with family before the track season steals him away again.

With piles of paper overtaking his office desk, chair and floor, it's obvious that many vie for his attention. Every day, mail collects outside his office door, forcing him to either scoop it up or step over it.

Terry Tomon, athletic department assistant, swears that Kyle knows where everything is underneath the avalanche of paper – most of it generated from colleges. "I can go into his office to ask for something, and he manages to pull out the one piece of paper we need from a pile," she observes.

With less than 1 percent of high school students in the nation earning football scholarships to college, Kyle does what he can to give Ignatius players the competitive edge.

He says the biggest advantage he offers his players is the opportunity to play at a Patriot or Ivy League college. Although the Division III and Ivies don't offer scholarships, Kyle says football can be a smart player's ticket into a prestigious school. Which is why in mid-December and again in May the Athletic Department is swarming with 200 college coaches and recruiters whom Kyle has invited to the campus.

"He works as hard, if not harder after the season ends getting kids into college," Tomon says.

STRENGTH IN MIND, BODY AND SOUL

Kyle attributes his strong work ethic to his father. Born in Hammond, Ind., Charles M. Kyle moved at age 5 to Cleveland with his family when his father landed a job at a steel mill, eventually working his way up to superintendent. "My dad taught me one important thing – outwork people," Kyle recalls.

Another influential figure was Paul Nemec, Kyle's assistant varsity coach at Saint Ignatius. Nemec instilled in the young tailback's mind that an athlete should be mentally, physically and spiritually strong. A message Kyle shares with his players today.

"Chuck was a great player. He had that little extra. It's called talent," Nemec recalls.

Nemec adds that he was ecstatic when Kyle returned

KYLE FIELD

Dedicated October 9, 1998

Kyle Field at Saint Ignatius was the second athletic field named in Kyle's honor. The first was a baseball field at Camp Cheerful, a camp for disabled children where Kyle worked as a counselor during his college summers.

BY THE NUMBERS

to Saint Ignatius during his senior year in college to work as an assistant coach. “I expected him to be here forever,” says Nemec, attributing a sense of humor and focus on academics to Kyle’s longevity.

Those who really know Kyle (“Chico” for friends and family) say that it is not coaching that has kept him at Saint Ignatius for 32 years. Even Kyle admits that if forced to choose between teaching and coaching, teaching would win. “I’ve done what a coach would want to do in high school coaching,” he says.

“My dad teaches a lot more than Xs and Os,” says Dan Kyle ’76, the oldest of Kyle’s four children.

Dan, who teaches 9th grade English in the San Francisco area, says people tend to overlook that his father teaches grammar, literature, Chaucer and Shakespeare. “He’s a great English teacher,” says Dan, who readily admits his father influenced his career decision. “I remember talking with my dad about Act II, Scene II of Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet in second grade. Now I’m teaching it to my ninth graders.”

Dan adds that he and his three younger sisters – Maureen, Anne and Bridget – all learned from their father to be driven, to take challenges and to pursue careers for the joy and not the money. “We’ve all found jobs that we really are ecstatic about. We love what we do because we learned that from our dad.”

Whether his own children or those he teaches, Kyle’s messages resonate with young people. “I think he realizes he is a role model for the students, and he strives to live up to expectations that are placed on him as a good teacher, coach and person,” says Pat Kyle, a fine arts teacher at Saint Ignatius and Kyle’s wife.

Pat, who started dating Kyle his senior year in college, notes that since age 14, Kyle has spent only three years of his life away from Saint Ignatius. “I knew what I was getting into right from the start,” Pat says.

With many of Kyle’s weekends and evenings consumed with coaching, Pat learned to be independent while raising four children. But she doesn’t feel slighted. “Ignatius is woven into the fabric of our family life,” she says. It also helps that Pat likes

Saint Ignatius has had 18 coaches in 89 years of football. With 24 years passing pigskin, Chuck Kyle has coached the longest. From 1983 to 2005, he’s coached nearly one-third of the Wildcats’ football games.

In the beginning coaches lasted only a short while. The team had a new coach every year from 1917 to 1923. That’s when Ralph Vince took over, and the team’s wins finally outweighed the losses. Vince coached four years (1923-1926). Real consistency began when coach Lenny Brickman took over from 1937 through World War II. His 10 years ended in 1946.

Coach John Wirtz (1951-1970) followed Brickman, spending 20 years on the Wildcat gridiron.

TOP SEVEN COACHES, BY LONGEVITY

1. Chuck Kyle	1983-present	24 years
2. John Wirtz	1951-1970	20 years
3. Lenny Brickman	1937-1946	10 years
4. William Reynolds	1929-1934	6 years
5. Paul Nemec	1971-1976	6 years
6. Al Gizzi	1977-1982	6 years
7. Ralph Vince	1923-1926	4 years

For more information on football history, visit www.ignatius.edu/athletics/.



When Coach Kyle talks, his players listen. The field is his classroom for life’s lessons.



Pat Kyle says her husband loves to dance. At weddings, his daughters fight over who gets to dance with their father.

high school football, which she jokingly says is the secret to her 30-year marriage to Kyle.

In order to balance coaching two sports, teaching and time with family, Kyle has become adept at time management, even if that sometimes means grading English papers at 2 a.m. "He pulls more out of a given day than most people," his son Dan observes.

Peter Corrigan Jr. '69, principal at Saint Ignatius and Kyle's former classmate, says Kyle is passionate about coaching, teaching and spiritual growth. "He brings an intensity and passion to teaching just like he does to coaching. It's inspiring," Corrigan says. "He also sees himself as a religious educator. He openly talks about faith with students and players."

Jacob Bell '99, guard for the Tennessee Titans, says he remembers how much Kyle stressed physical, mental and spiritual preparation before a game. Throughout his college and professional football career, Bell says he has never missed chapel before a game. "I still say the same prayer today as I did in high school."

Making time for God is important to Kyle. He attends Mass before games, he prays with the players, he has assisted with spiritual retreats and has done the *Spiritual Exercises* as part of his faith formation. "I think I'm doing what God wants me to do," he says.

More important than the championship trophies in the cases are the lives that Kyle has impacted throughout his career. He has inspired a countless number of young men to pursue their dreams: a career in the NFL, an Olympic gold medal, CEO of a Fortune 500 company, an entrepreneur of a small business or an English teacher.

"Any young person who comes to Saint Ignatius and is taught or coached by Chuck leaves a better person, a stronger person," notes Eddie Dwyer, a *Plain Dealer* sportswriter who has covered Ignatius football since the days when Kyle endured losses and booing spectators.

Drew Haddad '95 was a wide receiver for the Indianapolis Colts and most recently the Buffalo Bills. Now a free agent, he says that what he learned on the high school football field prepared him for the ups and downs of an NFL career. "We learned how to handle success and how to be men if we don't succeed."

Haddad calls Kyle his most influential coach. "He's a coach, a father figure, a teacher all in one," he says. "The purist form of football is at the college level. Coach Kyle embodies that."

Many of Kyle's former players say he taught them

Kyle

quiet confidence. "Do what you are supposed to do and act like you have been there before" has been a guiding motto for Bell and others.

Because Kyle teaches his athletes how to prepare for life and not just games or track meets, former pros like Dan O'Leary '95, say the transition from the NFL to the corporate sector has not been difficult for him. Now a sales representative for Cintas, O'Leary says attention to details and learning to set goals are critical in his new career. "I have been able to transfer all those skills I learned on the football field to what I'm doing now," he says.

32 YEARS AND COUNTING

Surely with so many career achievements, Kyle has received numerous offers from colleges. "I received two or three of substance," he admits. Former University of Notre Dame head coach Lou Holtz offered him an assistant coaching job with the Fighting Irish and former OSU head coach John Cooper asked him to be an assistant coach for the Buckeyes. He turned down both. Why?

"In college I can't teach, and it [football] becomes a business. I didn't want to wake up one morning and think this is not what I want to do," he says.

Certainly it's not money that keeps Kyle at Saint Ignatius. When he does the math, he earns about 25 cents an hour coaching.

So when will he call it quits? "I'll stop when I physically and mentally can't coach the way I believe. If I reach the point where I'm taking shortcuts, then I have to stop."

Until then Kyle has no plans to go anywhere. "I really don't think I have a resume," he says. He pauses to ponder his own statement and then continues, "Never had one. Don't think I'll ever have one." ^{SI}

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— CHUCK KYLE



Chuck Kyle had the honor of passing the Olympic Torch for the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, Ga. He ran with the torch on West 25th in Ohio City.

