



Coach Smiley requires the best of his Cardinal athletes, both on and off the field.



Photo courtesy of Trinity Valley Public Relations

INSPIRING EXCELLENCE

Story & Photos By
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COACHING IS A PROFESSION that takes a lot of dedication. It requires patience, determination, drive, and sacrifice. A coach celebrates during the highs, and inspires during the lows. Words shared by a good coach can stick with you forever.

All of this and more can be said of Trinity Valley Community College Football Head Coach and Athletics Director, Brad Smiley.

Smiley, a native of Natchitoches, LA, got his start in football much the same as everyone else in the South; by playing it. "I played football all throughout school," said Smiley. "I grew up a huge fan and I just loved the atmosphere." However, his football career came to a halt in high school when an injury put him on the sidelines. "I thought that had ended my chances," said Smiley. "I was interested in coaching, but I didn't think it would work out since I couldn't play."

In college, Smiley put his football dreams on hold for a business degree in marketing and law classes, with the aspirations of becoming a trial lawyer. "People tell me I would have been a very convincing trial lawyer had I continued down that path," Smiley says with a laugh.

But it would seem fate had another plan. During his sophomore year at Baylor, Smiley found out that his mother had breast cancer. "When my mother was

diagnosed with breast cancer, I decided to put school on hold to be with her," said Smiley. "It was a tough time."

Sadly, her battle ended like too many others, and this left him at a crossroads in life.

"It was really a wake-up call," said Smiley. "I decided then and there to try to get into coaching. Life is just too short not to go for it."

And go for it, he has. Smiley's background in business and marketing really pays off during the recruiting season, as well. "I love meeting people, so recruiting is right up my alley," Smiley says with a laugh. "As a matter of fact, when I told my Grandma that I was going to start coaching football she asked me what in the world I was going to use that marketing degree on now."

On and off the field, Coach Smiley holds his players to a strict set of rules, dubbed the Cardinal Core Values. These values are, 1. Be honest. 2. Respect authority. 3. Respect women. 4. No stealing. 5. No drugs.

"To be successful, you've got to have a plan of attack," explains Smiley. "I've found that if a young





man has a problem with any of these core values he's going to have trouble, not just in this program, but in life. It's part of my job to help them grow up and be successful, and move on to the next level."

Moving on to the next level is something Trinity Valley Community College can really boast about. Heading into his eighth year as Head Football Coach, Smiley has had more than 160 players move on to play at 4-year universities, and more than half of those have been with Division 1 FBS and FCS programs. In two out of the past three years, Trinity Valley has been the nation's best at getting guys to the Division 1 level.

"The reward in this is not necessarily what comes now, but in having the opportunity and the privilege to help these athletes achieve their goals," says Smiley. "To see them move on, and see the smiles on their faces when they sign on with a Division 1 team makes it all worth it."

Something that Smiley doesn't spend a lot of time doing is keeping the players inspired. "It's not my job

to keep them inspired," he explains. "That's their job. It's my job to keep them focused. That hunger and that drive needs to come from them."

That drive has definitely paid off for Coach Smiley. His dedication to the school, the team, and the sport in general has led the Cardinals to a peerless 12-0 season, becoming only the third team in school history to do so and the fourth to finish the regular season undefeated.

Smiley credits a lot of his success to having a strong support system in the form of his wife, Janna, children, Ben and Clary, and an awesome staff of assistants.

Coaching is not for the faint of heart. "You have to have perspective," explains Smiley. "If you're not in it for the right reasons, it makes it tough on everybody."

It's safe to say that Coach Smiley is in it for the right reasons. His enthusiasm is infectious, not only for the sport but for Trinity Valley as well. His drive to help these athletes realize their dreams is written on his face, and his love of the game can be seen in his eyes. Like all the other great coaches throughout history, his words of wisdom will undoubtedly live on in their hearts forever.

