

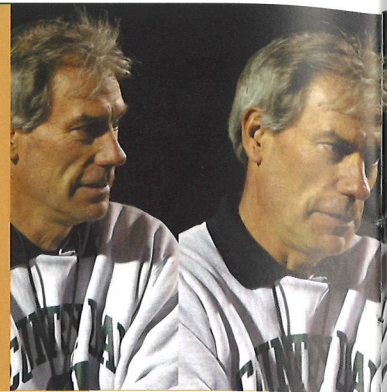
Coach Bob Witman

By Lee-Anne Black, editor

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FEATURE

Celebrating 15 Years Of Success



“Coach, you taught me the game of football ... but, beyond that you taught me to fight for what I want. You taught me to believe in myself; to set and achieve goals. You taught me to work hard in practice and then ‘play to win’ on Friday nights. I can never thank you enough for what you have done for me. I can only ask one thing of you now; I hope that, for Country Day’s sake, and for younger kids, you will stay at CCDS for as long as possible. I am of strong opinion that there is no man better suited to coach at Country Day.”

The quote above was excerpted from a letter written to coach Bob Witman in December 1991, by then-senior Trey Hackney '92. Coach Witman has just completed his 15th season as Country Day's head varsity football coach, and through the years has had the same kind of positive effect on hundreds of young men as he had on Trey.

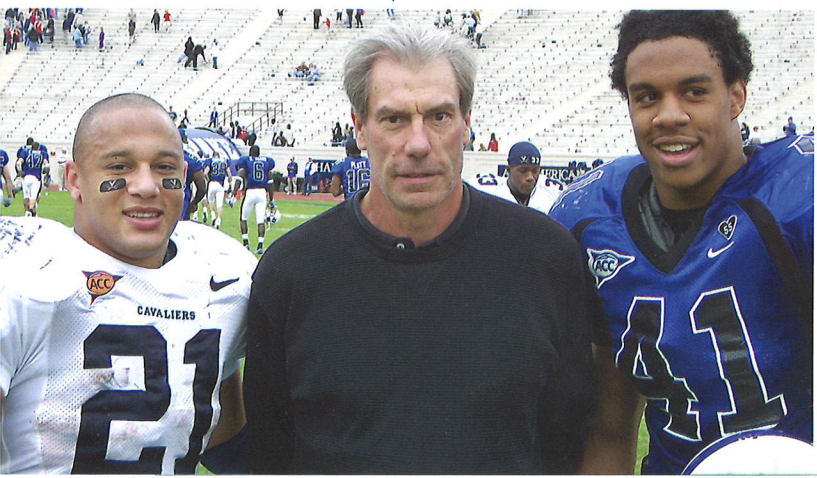
To the outsider looking in, Country Day football may seem about winning. After all, Coach Witman boasts an 80 percent winning percentage and has racked up numerous state championships (see box). Those closest to the program, however, know that winning is a side effect of the principles Coach Witman instills: teamwork, discipline, honor, scholarship, and loyalty. Parents and athletes agree that, through the game of football, Coach Witman prepares young men to succeed in life.

Last year, Joey Carroll '04 wrote to Coach Witman, “You taught me so much about football, but just as much about life. Playing varsity football with you as my coach was the most worthwhile experience of my life. Thanks for everything.” Back in 1993, parent Rob Heyer wrote: “Please continue your work as a coach—you inspired young people in a way only a few can do. Thank you for believing in our quiet son and recognizing his potential.”

While football is his passion, Coach Witman knows that athletic competition is just one component of a well-rounded life. For instance, he encourages his players to take part in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters tutoring program. Director Linda Shipley says, “Thanks to Bob's influence and belief in the value of this program, we are able to match every elementary school boy in the program with an older boy, who serves as a very needed role model.”

If you only see Coach Witman in action on Friday nights, you may not realize the staggering hours he commits to preparing for the game. During the season, the coaching staff puts in as many as eight hours on Saturday and Sunday breaking down the previous night's game and preparing for the next competitor.

Last fall, Coach Witman watched former CCDS standouts Alvin Pearman '00 and Justin Kitchen '02 play against each other at the college level. Alvin played tailback at UVA, was named to the All-ACC Team, and is preparing to enter the NFL draft. Justin Kitchen plays defensive end at Duke.

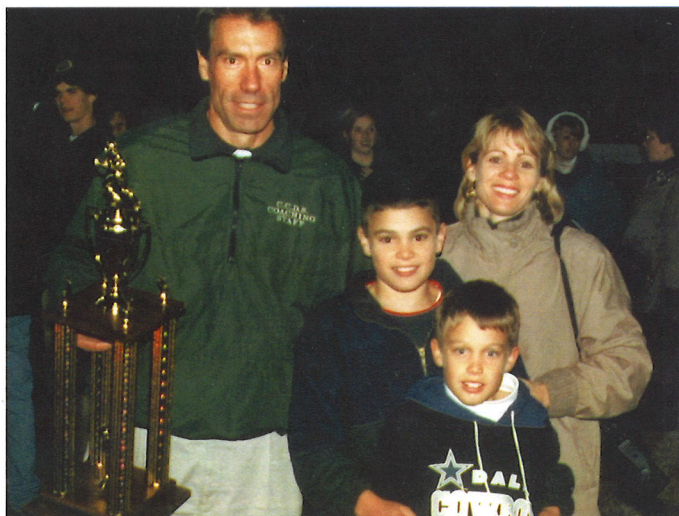




"Bob is one of the most successful coaches around because he works harder at it than any other coach," says assistant coach Mike Fresina. "The program is in a constant state of refinement. Be it researching and providing the best equipment, policing the players' weight room work, learning new drills and terminology, or exploring the latest trends in play calling and philosophy, Bob is tireless in his pursuit of an edge over the competition."

Coach Witman is quick to acknowledge others. He says he has been blessed with the best varsity assistants and Middle School and junior varsity coaches who help develop good players. And then there is Country Day tradition. "John Cook built this program, and all of us that may follow are just trying to maintain what he established," says Coach Witman. "John Cook is and will always be Country Day football."

Those who have experienced the Witman era would say the two men stand in good company.



For 15 years, Coach Witman and his family, seen here in the early 1990s, have been an integral part of the Country Day community. Donna Witman works in the school's advancement office, Vance '03 played varsity football (winning NCISAA Defensive Player of the Year) and baseball, and Drew '06 plays varsity football, basketball, and baseball.

By the Numbers

7

Number of NCISAA
State Championships

11

Number of visits to
NCISAA championships

136-33

Win/Loss Record

80

Winning Percentage

3

Times named NCISAA Coach of the Year

Above and Beyond

These current coaches have also given 15 years or more to the Country Day athletic program:

Calvin Davis

16 years, tennis

Win Robinson

19 years, golf,
soccer, track

Art Hoffman

15 years, lacrosse,
football, basketball

Brad Touma

17 years, lacrosse

Brian Kridler

16 years, soccer,
basketball

Ed Walton

30 years, baseball,
jv football

Al Pearman

16 years, track,
football

Dorcas Zeeso

17 years, field
hockey, track,
basketball,
swimming

Bob Plyler

27 years, golf, jv
football, basketball