

Javon Lindsey-Terrell

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Losing has its lessons

Third down in long with 5 seconds left before halftime. I drop back looking to throw a touchdown and literally nobody is open. I look to my last option which is my running back and I throw him the ball hoping he can make a big play for us. He catches the pass but boom he gets rocked by a defender and the crowd goes crazy for the other team as the first half of the game ends. Both teams now take a walk to the locker room to discuss our game plans for the second half. In my locker room it felt like people were ready to give up. There were a few players who just screamed about things as soon as we sat down but nobody listened because they were not leaders of the team. Nobody respected them enough to listen. The rest of the team was quiet. So quiet I didn't know if we had anything left in the tank to put up a fight. We were only down by two touchdowns, but the team was so good we didn't know which way it would go. There was a lot on the line in this game as this was only the second time my high school made the football playoffs in school history. The last time before this was probably no less than 15 years prior so nobody wanted to go out with a loss. While I was sitting in the corner alone thinking about the game and watching these players lash out and ready to cry already, I remembered something my coach told me when he first got the coaching job while I was a sophomore. He said, "By time you're a senior we will change this program all the way around". I had no doubt at the time that his statement would be true. Now back to the present. My Head coach and the rest of the coaching staff finally come in to calm down the screaming players. The defensive coach came in ready to work. He got all the defense together in the matter of seconds and automatically started

going over the game plan. The head coach got the offense together and said that “The game plan is working we just need to execute and play smart”. After the coaches are done with us separately then we come together to hear my head coach speak. His speech was persuasive and powerful. It got the team up and we seemed to be confident again. It was like something straight out of a football movie like Friday night lights or any given Sunday, but this was wasn't a movie and he wouldn't be getting an Oscar for his performance. Back to reality. Halftime is now over, and we are on the field for warmups. The stands are packed, they have a fan section with a Hawaiian theme, and the coolest thing of all. They have a chick-fil-a stand at the game. Imagine trying to throw passes to people and smelling waffle fries. Yeah, it's pretty distracting. My coach now tells me to come over because halftime has ended, and my team gets the ball first. The ball gets kicked off to us and you can hear the click clacks from the pads hitting each other. We get a good run and they finally bring our player down. I get the play from my coach and now it's time to see if we can turn the game around. We drive down the field and get to about the fifteen yard line. Now our fans are cheering louder than the opponent's fans for once. Before I call the play in the huddle my best friend who is also my left tackle tells me that I should run to his side, but unfortunately it was a passing play. We lined up for the play and I said go. I had to fake it to the running back then when I looked up to pass the ball everyone was in the wrong spot. So I went with what my best friend said, and I ran towards his side. As I broke free with some open space, I could hear how loud my team and the fans were cheering. We were down by two touchdowns and I knew how bad we needed this. While I ran, I seen two defenders getting close coming to me and an angle so I dove forward and stretched the ball out as far as I could. When I got up my teammates were running to me to celebrate and then I knew I scored a touchdown. From here all the doubt that the team had in the locker room at halftime had went away. We were ready to fight

back, but for rest of the game was just a huge rollercoaster. Every time we scored, they scored right back putting themselves up by two touchdowns. We scored one more putting ourselves down by just one touchdown, but they were a smart team and just ran the rest of the time out with runs plays. Once the clock hit zero the tears started to drop from my team. It was quiet on our side while the other team is celebrating with their friends and family. We had about 20 seniors and most of them would never wear a football uniform again which was sad because football was the only thing keeping some of these kids out of trouble. The most important thing to me though was that I felt like I let a whole entire community down. Once our family and friends came down to the field with us my water works started, and I was crying so ugly you would've thought my dog died. My coach seen me then came up to me and gave me a hug then said "don't be sad. we did what we talked about and changed the program around. The kids under you see what it takes to get here, and we'll be back."