

## Strategies for Winning by George Allen

1. Nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent.
2. The message: take nothing for granted.
3. The Los Angeles Rams had not posted a winning season in seven years when he arrived; the Redskins hadn't won in fifteen.
4. Today, he says, a coach must not only win, he must be compatible.
5. Allen was a classic worrier, as great coaches often are.
6. He is so tireless, so positive, so much into everything, he makes it easy for others to be jealous of him.
7. They are not sure how much he won by scheming and manipulation and how much just by outworking his rivals.
8. I like signs and other reminders. I just love them. I have a sign on my desk that says "THE TEAM IS NEVER UP!"
9. That sign reminds me never to take anything for granted and always do what you believe.
10. You've got to say things over and over again, because you only get through to about 40 percent of them the first time. It doesn't bother me that those 40 percent may have to hear the same thing seven times. It's better than the other 60 percent not hearing you at all.
11. The devotion to positive thinking.
12. Sir Winston Churchill defined the basis of class. It is the discovery of adversity that man is nothing but a spirit. This is not the spirit of going down fighting. Quite the contrary. On the heart of every real pro is engraved, "Don't die fighting; fight to win."
13. Raw physical courage is a basic necessity, but class is the courage of the spirit; not merely the taking of the field but the indomitable pitting of the heart against impossible odds.
14. How I motivate myself.
15. Stay positive all day.
16. Get up earl.
17. Have a good physical workout: one hour of any or all of the following.
18. After a good workout, read a newspaper; relax.
19. Eat a fiber breakfast of natural raw-foods.

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20. Organize myself away from distractions.
21. Play a cassette of inspirational music.
22. Make sure I get fresh air.
23. Visit someone – or a hospital.
24. You must ENJOY what you do...be enthused with your activities, in love with the idea of winning.
25. REACH BEYOND your abilities.
26. You must treat your body with respect.
27. First leading yourself, and then leading others by your example.
28. People who are winners: people who are on time, people who are in shape (*year round*), people who are enthusiastic, people who are self-disciplined, people who are committed to a goal, people who are dedicated to their job, people who are organized, people who are tough mentally, people who enjoy helping others, people who are innovative, people who are loyal, people who enjoy life. (*Relate these to a basketball player. Players who enjoy playing \_\_\_\_\_ are excited playing for \_\_\_\_\_*).
29. The big thing is not what happens to us in life, but what we do about what happens to us. (*Excellent quote to look at when building a program. Make it visible every day.*)
30. From the start I argued that the USFL should grow slowly, resist expansion and allow eight original teams to establish an identity.
31. Too many inexperienced investors expected us to draw big crowds overnight.
32. It was a failure of commissioners, first Chet Simmons and then Usher, not to check out the qualifications of the owners thoroughly.
33. Merging is like bringing another family to live in your house. The chemistry is never there. It may start out all right, but in the history of all sports there never has been a successful merger of two franchises.
34. I have never regretted making sacrifices, working seven days a week, a minimum of 100 hours. The most enjoyable times are when you work hard and overcome the odds.
35. The main thing is to remember that you start over every day.
36. Most of the time there is some benefit from every setback, if you approach it properly. That is attitude and that is motivation.

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37. I wonder how many times, out of meekness or inertia, we talk ourselves out of a reward easily attained.
38. I can see no difference between a chair and a man who sits in a chair if he is not accomplishing something.
39. What you do in the off-season determines what you do during the season.
40. Don't do things in the off-season, you are not going to win.
41. One thing you can't do in any business: you can't let problems lick you, because they will always be there. Every day I try to run up to three miles and work out with weights, just to offset all the nagging problems that arise.
42. I never tried to motivate a player until I knew something about him. I would begin by just talking, getting his thoughts on different things – on what he hoped to achieve, what he had done in the past, why he did or did not succeed, how he spent his time after practice and in the off-season.
43. Being in an organization that knows how to win, knows what to do to win, is completely organized, and has a philosophy and a program.
44. What counts is having the right kind of individual, not just one with experience.
45. Everybody has to have a philosophy.
46. You have to believe in certain things.
47. You don't change your philosophy when you lose if it is a sound philosophy and you understand it.
48. I think you have to say things over and over again because you only get through to about 40 percent of them the first time.
49. Even things that seem minor can lead to results that are major.
50. I wanted my players to see that everything was freshly painted, everything was new that had to be replaced.
51. An athlete can have a great natural ability but will never reach his or her potential unless a proper attitude can be developed.
52. One of the great opportunities in life is to take an ordinary job and make something out of it.
53. Whether a person is a coach or a player or a musician, what counts is to want to do something in life and make a contribution. What a pathetic ambition it must be to go through life content to eat, watch TV, sleep, drink, and drive a car.
54. After the players learn the fundamentals and the playbook, it is morale that makes the team.

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55. We tried to create in our players a real love for the game and a spirit of work, determination and loyalty.
56. A family, and to forget jealousies or animosities cannot be done fifteen minutes after the kickoff. (*or right before a problem*)
57. We encouraged players to have respect for each other and to help one another. In other words, a general feeling of mutual admiration.
58. "Let what you hear there, see there, and say there... STAY THERE!"
59. The more you encourage or motivate someone, the better he will perform and the more he will produce. So I don't believe in browbeating people. The more productive they feel, the better the relationship they will have with others in the group.
60. The name across your uniform is Detroit. Starting this year that is a special name. This is a very good team now and we will be respected by everyone.
61. More space is required to properly house people to get their jobs done; better rest room facilities are required for sanitation purposes and more conference rooms are necessary to work with meetings, players and prospects.
62. An error becomes a mistake only when you refuse to correct it.
63. Anyone who achieves much must sacrifice much. Anyone who would accomplish little must sacrifice very little. Achievement of any kind is the result of hard work and good preparation.
64. However sound my ideas might be, they became effective only as they were transmitted to my team to achieve the desired action.
65. Communication is more important than knowledge.
66. I always walked in at the exact time the meeting was to start. I did not stand there waiting for them; you lose your effectiveness if you are too early for the meeting.
67. One thing indecision does is bring on fatigue. Always trying to make the right decision is impossible. Do what you believe, do what you want, and work hard to make the decision the correct one.
68. There are some people who have many things started, most left undone, nothing completed.
69. Every time I took over a team, in both college and professional football, it was a rebuilding job. As a result, there were times when we were decided underdogs. I'd say, "We face a challenge and have a great opportunity this week." This creates in the players mind a picture of success and fun, something rewarding and pleasant. I've heard others say, "We face problems this week." Now, that

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creates an image of something difficult, confusing and unpleasant to solve. Most successful coaches I have known are specialists in creating positive, optimistic pictures in their own minds and in the minds of others. In football and in business, we must use words and phrases that produce big, positive mental images all the time. Lee Iacocca of Chrysler Corporation does this. So does Bob Beck at Prudential.

70. I used the same approach in my film breakdowns. For example, if we had difficulty defending a screen pass, I would have our film expert, Nate Fine, splice together all our well-defensed screen passes, so the defensive players would see themselves only at their best against all types of screen passes by each offense.
71. I would also have another reel of poorly executed plays by our defense, and we would use it after showing the successful film. Sometimes I would not even show this negative reel, because we improved just by showing the positive images and reviewing the basic rules. It shows you can teach by employing *only* positive techniques.
72. I've tried to sign Jackson, but he doesn't want to sign with us. He doesn't like our franchise.
73. So far, I've not been able to sign Jackson, but I know he will. I'm going to keep trying until I succeed.
74. Five more years is not really a long time. That leaves at least fifteen years to be a head coach.
75. The Cowboys are strong – there is no denying that. But no one has all the advantages. Let's figure out a way to beat them at their own game.
76. Nobody will ever want to buy this home.
77. In its present form, it may not bring the best price, but let's consider painting and some modifications. Then it will sell.
78. The future is now. Let's start action today, not tomorrow or next week.
79. What separates the perennial champions from the other athletes is the ability to perform up to their capabilities under stressful situations.
80. If you maintain your composure, anything can happen. But if you lose it, nothing will happen.
81. The way I look at football is, if you're going to beat me, you've got to beat everything I've got, everything I can do to you. You will have my total, complete concentration.
82. Risks are fun if you're prepared and in shape.
83. A Child's Commandments to Parents: My hands are small, please don't expect perfection whenever I make a bed, draw a picture or throw a ball. My legs are

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95. Find out what he wants.
96. Find out what he rejects.
97. I would change all the posters on the office and locker room walls every month. In addition, I asked Nate Fine, our film director, to change the blowups of action photos every two to three weeks.
98. Try to regard every corrective situation as an opportunity to build a better relationship with the students, not to widen the gap or destroy the lines altogether.
99. Not until I walked to the microphone that morning did I make up my mind what I wanted to say. I looked out into the audience at men and women representing the fifty or sixty surviving Chrysler dealerships across the country (out of a high of nearly 200) and I said:

"This is great! You have gotten rid of all the quitters and front runners and you are down to just the winners. The people in this room are the pros, the ones who won't fold." My hand swept across the audience. "These are the people you can count on...the ones who didn't get in because the car business looked like a way to make a quick buck. You can't help but succeed now. You're down to the people who will stick it out and turn things around."

Then I told them about my first coaching job, in 1949 at tiny Morningside College in Iowa. "That year I kept putting up notices and writing letters and telling everybody to come out for football. So we started out with 100 players and we didn't have uniforms for all of them. Some were coming out in shorts and no pads, and we couldn't even scrimmage them. But I put them on two-a-days for three straight weeks, and the players started dropping out, quitting. Soon I had plenty of uniforms to go around.

"The number got down to fifty and then forty. I began to worry that we wouldn't have enough players to open the season. We got down to twenty-seven from a squad that once numbered 100. And this was when you had two platoons, offense and defense. I had only five substitutes in case of injuries. To make matters worse, we had an eleven-game schedule, unusual for those days.

"What happened taught me a lasting lesson. We only lost three of those games. And the reason was simple; what we had remaining was the cream of the crop. These were the guys who should have been out there in the first place, who had the ability and wanted to play, not because it was the fashionable thing to do. And they were in great condition. They were in shape."

The point of the story was not lost on those in the room, who were putting their careers and the security of their families on the line. "The people in this room," I went on, "are the ones who probably belonged in the business in the first place. Not the ones who jumped on the bandwagon when it looked easy, or before the Japanese began to make things tough. Maybe a lot of those who are gone now got in for the quick buck. They may not have been qualified, or committed

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to sticking it out. It means something when you can look around a room and know that you are seeing people who will be in the hard times. That's why we made it at Morningside, and that's why Chrysler will make it back. You're going to have a good year."

Of course, they did, and the comeback of Chrysler was one the dramatic success stories of any era. The government loan, \$2 billion, was paid off with interest in less than three years. The pep talk I gave them had nothing to do with that recovery, but I did predict it and I am proud of having show those dealers a truth that has been tested time and again.

When the tough times come, you circle the wagons, and that is when you must be able to rely on the people around you. That is why I have included this story in a chapter on family motivation rather than in the business section.

The people who really matter in life may be few, but they are all your family. There is a special kind of help, of strength, that we draw from our parents, our brothers and sisters, a husband, a wife, our children. At times, those feelings apply to teammates or the people you work with.

It is no accident and no work of fiction that a great baseball team, the Pittsburgh Pirates of the 1970's, used as its theme the popular song "We Are Family." My guess is that the people who stuck with Chrysler share the sentiment.

In a funny way, I was almost one of them. My first job after I finished high school was at the Chrysler plant in Jefferson, as a messenger boy working for \$80 a month. This was not long after the Depression, when full-time jobs were scarce.

I had two bosses, a Mr. Maguire and a Mr. Merritt, and I was assigned to the planning department. One of the things I learned was that by using the stairs and not taking the elevators, I could deliver the daily schedules throughout the Jefferson plant and the Kercheval Body Plant across the street about forty-five minutes faster. When Mr. McGuire became aware of this, he was impressed enough to give me a \$20-a-month raise – to \$100. After two years, I took a hard look around me and asked myself if this was what I wanted my future to be. I resigned, took the \$1,100 I had saved and went off to college.