

*Urban's Way by Buddy Martin*

1. Philosophy that football is coached and played with maximum effort and competitive excellence.
2. His maniacal obsession with detail and zealous quest of winning.
3. A clear sense of commitment.
4. Coaches rarely have time to stop and reflect on their success as it is unfolding. There is always the next season, next game, or next down to spoil the mood.
5. All those years as an assistant coach siphoning off the knowledge from his bosses, squirreling it away in diary form.
6. He promises each player: "I will not quit on you."
7. A "Champions Club," almost like a frequent flier program.
8. Committed to rescuing young athletes from the predicaments of their poor judgment.
9. A hard charging young assistant who paid attention and took copious notes, then collated them into a manual of innovative techniques as he moved up on the coaching ladder toward his dream.
10. He talked about total commitment for the one hundred and seven days leading up to the SEC Championship game.
11. On our bowl game preparations, I don't go anything beyond four-or five-day segments because you lose the players.
12. Life as a Gator football player begins with throwing your press clippings away and taking a quick inventory of your shortcomings.
13. "One of the biggest misconceptions for these kids is that they think they understand competition," Donovan said. "And what happens is that when they are highly touted – and they've been billed or dubbed as the next NFL star or next NBA star – there can be a lot of easy ways of going through and they've never faced adversity. I think what Urban is doing every day is creating [competitive] confrontation out on the football field to show these guys.
14. The Champions Club, and for the freshmen's indoctrination of their stripe. (All incoming freshman start with a black piece of tape on their helmets, which is removed in a battlefield promotion.)
15. It usually is ten thirty at night before Meyer gets home during the season.
16. The day I got that call about Avery Atkins...I'll never be the same person or the same coach.
17. I don't believe that was as true ten years ago with me. Because the stakes weren't the same.

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18. "There were no weapons," Meyer said of his early days as an assistant. "You heard about bar fights. Ok, but there weren't six shots being fired in a bar. Drugs weren't like they are today."
19. That's investment. That's the long runs, that's the hard lifts, that's the hard practices, that's the meeting sessions, that's living your life right – all that stuff.
20. Do your job! – one of Meyer's favorite slogans.
21. One small part of that manual is the "Plan to Win."
22. Tucked inside the 129-page document is the Plan to Win.
23. He says it drives every player personnel issue, every game plan, and every decision that he makes in football.
24. An offense that takes care of the football will not compromise the defense.
25. Also included are the guides on how assistant coaches should coach, expectations about player academics, proper player nutrition, acceptable behavior while on a date, and a day planner that covers August through November.
26. The Plan was conceived and written with a purpose, out of the need for some kind of blueprint as a new head coach.
27. That's when the core values came up. That was done over a one-week period sitting at my house – early in the morning, until late at night, putting that book together.
28. Meyer was aware that new assistant coaches, like himself, often struggled to learn the way and philosophies of their new boss. That's why he put it all together into one manual.
29. Each player is nurtured physically, nutritionally, academically, socially, and sometimes when they want it, even spiritually. Building trust is the goal.
30. He coaches his players in football, academics, health, decision-making, discipline, physical fitness, accountability.
31. Amnesia, the latter obviously suggesting that a badly beaten defensive back get over the trauma quickly.
32. Each some of that trust and you make your way into the Champions Club, where the players get better athletic clothing, better food, and the ultimate respect of coaches and peers. It is a circle of trust based on adherence to team rules and putting forth a higher degree of effort in the classroom and on the field.
33. It's all about the future players' investment in core values.

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34. You have responsibilities/obligations; not entitlements.
35. Do your job, noting else.
36. Captain's Dinner, during which current players get a live lesson in the team's heritage.
37. Some of you woke up on third base and don't even know how you got there because you did not hit the triple.
38. Each year when Meyer invites the new recruits to his house, he hands each of them a card with pictures of four rings on it, signifying the high-water mark set by the 1993 class, which one four SEC rings and a national championship.
39. Victory comes at a price and like everything else in his program, it should be earned.
40. Failure comes at a price.
41. That to get the best out of athletes, it would take more than regiment, discipline, and veiled threats. He and Meyer would scheme up ways later at Florida to entice the players to work harder – a sort of a caste system of the locker room. Those who worked hardest on the field, in the classroom, and in the weight room – plus kept their personal lives in order – would be rewarded with better living. That meant better gear, better food, and more privileges.
42. Relationships with players became everything.
43. He brought rough sketches of a new offense with him to Bowling Green in his notebook filled with thoughts from his conversations with Linehan in Louisville.
44. John Wooden's book on coaching shouldn't be treated equally, but rather rewarded for how they contributed to the team.
45. While it may have seemed Meyer was making it up as he went along, in reality he was cherry-picking the best ideas and cobbling them together with his own fresh, imaginative perspective and growing his football IQ.
46. Meyer knew the risk, but he also knew the opportunity.
47. Meyer, himself, tutored the players.
48. Since his family had not yet arrived from South Bend, he would often stay up until 11:00 p.m., working on the math board in the math lab with players. Other assistants did the same.
49. And that's when our players fell in love with them [assistant coaches].
50. Every player just wants to be helped. We were physically helping players. We owned them after that.

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51. He wanted to send them off on a good note, they felt a sense of purpose.
52. He told Shelley before the first game, "What if we lose every game? How long will they keep me? Two years? Three years?"
53. If done correctly, the player-coach relationship is the most meaningful relationship second only to the parent-child relationship.
54. You know there are really only about eight teams in the nation that ever do things the right way. And we're going to be one of those football teams.
55. "Champions Banquet" held at the Meyer household.
56. "The huddle is the greatest in football, because it doesn't matter whether you are black or white or Hispanic or Polynesian or Chinese, Catholic or Jewish. On fourth down and one, everybody grabs a hand and squeezes tight and says let's go".
57. But the huddle breaks every barrier- religious, racial, rich or poor.
58. It was blunt to have your head coach screaming and yelling that 'you're too weak, you're too slow, you're too little, and you're never going to be able to play like that.'
59. I learned to appreciate it because everyone is so tight because we've been through so much together. Those mental barriers are broken down.
60. Meyer called them 'the most 'invested team' in the country'.
61. Right away Urban was impressed with Foley, and Foley was impressed with Meyer, who, he said, "was organized, straightforward, and asked a lot of questions."
62. Jeremy Foley is like Chris Hill, my AD at Utah – the ultimate professional, said Urban. He [Foley] had put together a book which he handed me that contained a testimony from the coaches – including Billy Donovan. He had Billy call me. More importantly, he had Christine call my wife to talk about the church, about the schools, about places to live. He had it all covered. He did his homework on me and knew all I cared about was my family and recruiting. And whether I can get it done there. He had all that, A to Z. Phenomenal. That's what makes Jeremy the best there is.
63. Meanwhile, learning of Notre Dame's trip to Salt Lake, Foley had scrapped the idea of going through a "process" to hire Meyer and had flown to Salt Lake, contract in hand. He met with Meyer the day of the scheduled discussion with Notre Dame and tried to sway him with an attractive offer, but to no avail.

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64. Urban discussed matters of the schedule, admissions, and facilities with them.
65. They work as a duo in this unique role as life coaches and mentors for Gator football players. She worries about Urban because of his self-inflicted negativity when things are going badly for his team or one of his players.
66. His proactive approach to player issues.
67. Urban promised himself to keep emotions in check following an episode at Notre Dame when he fell to the ground on his knees from from excruciating pain in his head.
68. Trying to get young men to live right can be perplexing and exhausting.
69. You're not going to win every battle, but the ones you win, what's going to place a price tag on saving a life? And maybe failing if the guy doesn't change?
70. As Meyer put that staff together, he placed a high priority on wisdom and experience.
71. Meyer always wanted to hire his dream team of coaches one day. When he was named Florida's new head coach, he already had that list ready.
72. The group of coaches that Meyer put together to help win the 2006 national championship were excellent teachers, strong motivators, dogged recruiters, good in-game decision makers, and dedicated staff members. They had good chemistry and shared a common vision.
73. And then you need a bunch of recruiting fools that don't mind spending six nights in a row in a hotel.
74. The annual staff retreat when they openly challenged each other's theories and philosophies.
75. I always want to hear a better way of doing things.
76. Assistants are expected to take on the responsibilities for their players – whether babysitting them, tutoring them, counseling them about their girlfriends, or simply teaching them better fundamentals on the field.
77. "I don't want to deal with issues...I want to coach football. And a lot of times the head coach becomes the 'issue coach.' If I spent eight hours working on guys who miss class...that's not my job. It's the position coach's job. And some are better than others."
78. He and his wife, Ann, just love players.

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79. He never worked at being a head coach. He worked at being a good coach.
80. I think the thing I learned from Urban is how important that relationship is with the kids how to get involved in their lives and how to develop their trust.
81. When you get a head job...people come out of the woodwork. You've got a lot of friends, but you've got to hire the best people for the job.
82. Your job as a coach is to utilize your personnel, not to design some scheme. There's no magic scheme. You better get your tail out and recruit, because the result is that it changes and you need to match your personnel.
83. Although you can never escape your passion.
84. He'd [Meyer] practice for three and a half hours.
85. And then he'd get in the car and go speak to three fraternities every night.
86. Urban was so upset after the trip to Columbia that he had the captain park the airplane and called a team meeting at the gate, challenging any potential quitters to leave the team.
87. The flight attendant made an announcement over the intercom, catching everyone by surprise, "Coach Meyer would like to see everybody, so please remain in your seats."
88. This turned into – and I kid you not! – an hour-and-a-half-or-two-speech.... He's got everybody on the back of the plane coming up front and standing up. And it was basically a man-to-man, heart-to-heart speech.
89. Starting in 2006, road trips were to become pleasurable. The mornings of the games would be more about waking players up with a purpose and interacting with assistant coaches the moment their feet hit the floor. And making it fun.
90. This came from Coach Holtz: It's an unusual environment for them, so the coaches go in with a glass of orange juice and a newspaper – rip the door open, throw the sheets back, turn on the TV, throw the drapes open, get real loud, have fun with them. I noticed the players started getting a kick out of it.
91. As for "Not even in the walk-through" mantra, Lewis said. "That's what gave me the personality that I had. I had lived by that quote every day I touched the football field. It just meant I didn't want anybody to complete a pass on me.



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92. There's one thing about being knocked down and getting back up: It's easier to win and win them all, but there's something about a team getting knocked off course and end up finding a way to come back and do something special. Coach Meyer gave us a card of that, with the whole quote of Danny's and that little thing we kept to ourselves – a card with the SEC Championship rings on it. It was something we kept with us the rest of the year.
93. The blocked kick was fate, perhaps, in a spiritual sense, but Moss also agrees with his former coach that design and rehearsal play a big part.
94. We practiced that play numerous times and in every practice. But I never blocked it one time in practice. But we still practiced me jumping every practice, and it paid off, because when it came time, it was in my mind what to do.
95. This convergence of hard work, intelligent decisions, teammates trusting each other and making a commitment to a common goal.
96. It was his blueprint for success.
97. The only different wrinkle, said Smith, was that Meyer backed off a little on some of the grueling workouts because the athletes at Florida were the elite recruits that he didn't have at Utah. "At the same time he kept his sternness about him, but the players at Florida weren't used to it at all....It was a big-time football and people could never tell them anything because they were big-time recruits.
98. I think his whole aim is to change lives, Smith said of Meyer. "A lot of coaches go into the job saying, "I'm not your babysitter, I'm your coach.".... "I am your football coach but at the same time, I'm going to hold you accountable and I want to make you a better man." And that's what I really loved about being under him.
99. To take a risk/reward responsibility not only produced the winning drive. Nobody is free from weakness.
100. You let that go, you hear me! You let it go, you take your chances, you shoot everything you've possible got at it.
101. So on my game plan sheet, right at the bottom, I wrote down, "Let it go."
102. What is courage? Is that the lack of fear? No, courage is being afraid, but doing it anyway.
103. The skill set for success.
104. Competitive excellence.
105. We believe in hard work and being trained for that moment when your number's called.

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106. It's competitive excellence. So when your number is called, you make that play.
107. This was not just any old bulletin board, but a ten-foot monstrosity strategically placed near the food table the week before the game, which Meyer called "ten feet of nonsense."
108. On it were clippings about Ohio State's superiority and Florida's fallibility, taken from newspaper or magazine stories, the Internet, and, in some cases, right out of a fiction book.
109. Meanwhile, Meyer also showed his players a copy of Lindy's Fiesta Bowl preview, "A Championship Season," which someone had sent him. The slick magazine featured Ohio State Buckeyes plastered on every page but two.
110. He'd skip over to a page with a photo of Buckeye quarterback Troy Smith and say, "Who's that? Chris Leak is a pretty good quarterback, too."
111. Urban put a big orange "F" next to "Quarterbacks" for "advantage, Florida." And so on.
112. If there had been any doubt by any of the Florida players about whether they were the better team, it was pretty much erased.
113. "So those kids went to bed that night knowing that we had the advantage," Meyer said.
114. Meyer had his team so convinced they were going to win that the players felt they couldn't be stopped.
115. The afterglow-turned-arrogance and face expectation.
116. Discipline is not dismissal in your opinion. Discipline is education and correction, then doing what you've got to do. We're in the process of doing a lot of educating, a lot of correcting, and putting a product on the field.
117. Maintaining execution excellence.
118. Urban remembers worrying about "egos, selfish approach to the game – all things that are conducive to not being a very good team."
119. Since the culture of Meyer's football team was built on sweat equity, with players receiving status through their conduct on the football field, in the classroom, and in their social activities, there was an order to everything. Even who got to eat first.
120. The numbers 4 and 6. Those numbers were printed on big block letters and posted on the locker room door leading to the South end zone with the admonition: 4 to 6 seconds of relentless effort.



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121. Meyer picked those increments because that was approximately how long it took to run a play and wanted that "4 to 6 seconds" to become instinctive effort, from snap to whistle.
122. Underneath the sign DO YOUR JOB.
123. Recruiting was paying off and a depth of talent was being stockpiled, which gave Meyer enough material for the "competitive excellence" among his players.
124. Meyer's Plan to Win does not include luck, because it is designed down to every last detail, implying the proper work ethic fuels the engine that leads to success.
125. Meyer warned them "You may not be good enough to play here – not because of talent, but lack of effort."
126. This was about strategy and not emotion.
127. You've got to have enthusiasm.
128. I always want to treat people on the Gator Walk just like I wanted to be treated when I was younger – shake their hands if possible. The fans have been there all day, working just like we've been working.
129. You can't in any way duplicate the process of development.
130. Private meal when coaches, their wives, players, and children have dinner together after Thursday night practices – another way Meyer and his coaching staff get across the family image and role model that parents should play.
131. Dan Mullen and Tim worked so hard on it. They redid his entire mechanics of throwing. As a bailout, Tebow could resort to his running.
132. Discipline to.
133. Discipline, he said, is anticipation.
134. The X's and O's of Meyer's program aren't' as important as the ABC's of life.
135. "People fail to put a price tag on momentum....That's one of the higher-priority items in dealing with youth."
136. All these players away from home are not with their parents and they don't have anybody to tell them no or 'Don't do this or that.' What coaches don't realize is you have to be that father figure – you have to be able to change somebody's life. To be able to put somebody on the right track and be their football coach at the same time.