

LET THE CHIPS FALL WHERE THEY MAY

The Story of Legendary Harlan Community Football Coach, Curt Bladt

INTRODUCTION

Friday nights in the fall have always been special in Harlan, Iowa. I know they were for me. I grew up six blocks north of historic Merrell Field, the home of the beloved Harlan Community Cyclones football team.

The Merrill Field lights that illuminated the sky at 6:30pm drew me to them like a moth to a flame. Maybe it was in my blood. My grandfather played for Harlan coached their first undefeated team in 1906. My dad played for the Cyclones in the early 1930's. Later in his life, he kept the records for all Harlan games played.

At any rate, I had a burning desire to head south on Tenth Street to Merrill Field to watch and some day emulate my high school heroes – Harlan half-backs Skip Louie, Gary Larsen and Gary Jorgensen. I wore a jersey with Skip's #27 on it to the first day of kindergarten at Laurel School. My favorite number is 27 to this day.

Like high school football in so many towns across America, Harlan Cyclone football is a chance for teenage boys to briefly shine under those lights. Even more importantly, it's a chance for them to learn the vital lessons they will need to shine in their future lives.

This book examines on one football program's history and one coach's life. In order to understand Curt Bladt The Person, I believe it's important to understand The Preparation that molded his character. Section 1 examines Curt's boyhood, high school and college years.

In addition to The Preparation, it's vital that you know The Place where The Person achieved success. Thus, in Section 2, you will have a brief history lesson on Shelby County, Harlan football and Merrill Field. You will also learn how The Cyclone Way serves as the foundation for all of Harlan Community School District's activities. Finally, you will discover the Six Building Blocks of Cyclone Football Success.

After you understand The Preparation and The Place, in Section 3, you will meet The Players who made it happen. One year at a time, from Curt's first year as an assistant in 1968 through the state championship year of 2005, you will get to know the hundreds of players who proudly wore the Cyclone uniform.

In Section 4, after The Preparation, The Place and the The Players groundwork has been laid, you will discover The Person Curt Bladt really is.

Throughout the book, I've sprinkled a few of Curt's favorite quotes and comments posted on the CoachBladt.com website created by Ruthanne Grimsley. To date, there have been 900,000 hits and 250,000 unique visitors!

Those website numbers generated by players, friends, community members, officials, opposing coaches and complete strangers reveal the depth and breadth of people's admiration for Curt Bladt the man and the football coach. Great men and football coaches aren't born. They're made. There is always the story before the story – The Preparation.