

The Man Behind The Tigers COACH



Gary Joseph

by **Melanie Saxton** *photography by* **Suzi Issa**

Just about everyone in Katy has heard of him. Gary Joseph has coached in Katy for 26 years, took over as Head Coach at Katy High School in 2004, and led the Tigers to the 5A State Division II Championship during Katy High School's 2007/2008 football season. He's the Katy Area Chamber of Commerce 2007 Citizen of the Year and the recipient of numerous coaching awards. And he's been a lector at St. Bartholomew Catholic Church for over twenty years.

But most importantly, he's the son of a high school football coach. "My four siblings and I were from a blue collar family. My dad was very busy with his coaching duties. But we were never hungry, and we never felt deprived. My mother, who was an excellent coach's wife, held down the fort. I'm grateful that we developed a tremendous work ethic," says Joseph. Coach Joseph had one simple reason for choosing his vocation: "I went into coaching because my father was happy to go to work every day," says Joseph. "Like my dad, I'm doing what I love to do." And Katyites are happy Coach Joseph made this particular career choice.

A Family Legacy

Three generations of coaches have sprung from the Joseph family tree. Coach Joseph played high school football for his father at Wharton, and later graduated from Sam Houston State University with a degree in Physical Education and a minor in History. He also

earned his Masters in Education. "I'm a typical coach," says Joseph. "I'm here for the kids and love the game."

In fact, Joseph coached his own sons as they went through the program at Katy High School. All of his children ended up coaching professionally in one form or another. Jon, his eldest, is a horse trainer and riding instructor at Smith Ranch. Jeff is a high school football coach at Seven Lakes. And Julie, his daughter, is a coach at Cardiff Junior High School.

Coach Joseph is proud that his children get up and go to work doing something they love. If there's one thing he and his wife of 29 years, Sheila, have learned about parenting, it's to be patient and consistent. "Today, more than ever, kids need to develop their own work ethic so they can become the best people they can be," says Joseph. "My dad was a great coach but he was an even better person. His example is our family legacy."

Proud Katy Parents

"There's no better place to raise kids, or I wouldn't have stayed in Katy all these years," says Joseph. "Parents in Katy let us coach their kids. They know we coach them the way we would coach our own kids." From the sweltering two-a-day workouts, to the quest for good grades, Coach Joseph tells all his coaches to build relationships

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Katy Football Coach Gary Joseph

with each player. “We are here to be competitive and there is no substitute for hard work in this age of instant gratification. But we also recognize that kids are individuals. Kids, like everyone else, have limits. We simply ask them to do their best.” Joseph believes the small town atmosphere and sense of community are assets to the program. Katy parents are known to be loyal fans and supportive volunteers. “It’s obvious that parents care. They spend hours scrubbing sidewalks to make sure the paws are just right,” says Joseph. “Our program is earmarked by the character of good kids. People can be proud of good kids. And we recognize that the people of Katy want to support good kids.”

Overcoming Obstacles

When Coach Joseph gives advice to up-and-coming coaches, it’s this: “Get into coaching for the right reasons. Get into coaching for the kids.” Coaching is demanding work, requiring sacrifice. The time spent away from home can be daunting. But Coach Joseph believes that shaping young lives counts for something.

“One thing I’ve learned being a coach: Perseverance. Not everyone may remember, but Katy High School football has had its tough times. Back when Katy High School split and Taylor High School was formed, it was very difficult playing on a 5A level with small numbers. But that word - perseverance - made the difference. We hung in there. We grew. We improved. It took a while, but look at the accomplishments of our kids today,” says Joseph. The football program at Katy High School obviously impacts young players. “Three on staff last year played for me in years past,” says Joseph. “When we say we have an outstanding high school coaching staff - the kind of people you want to teach your sons - we’re serious.”

The Upcoming Season

Last year was a success both on and off the field. Six football players were named Academic All-State and a football player was Salutatorian of his graduating class. “This is a compliment to Katy High School academics and our athletic program,” says Joseph. “We also graduated 60 lettermen, with only 15 returning along with two starters, one on both sides of the ball. It may sound a little frightening. But we have faced this before.”

According to Joseph, “Kids going through the program now expect to win. Their coaches expect them to win.” The words in the foyer of the field house say it all: When excellence becomes tradition, greatness has no limits. And with State championships in 1959, 1997, 2000, 2003, and 2007, tradition is everything for the Tigers. “We at Katy High School are blessed with great kids, great administration and supportive teachers. Joe Kelly is an outstanding principal who helps us every year to strengthen our relationship with the community. Rusty Dowling, Executive Director of Athletics for Katy ISD, is also a tremendous support. We look forward to an excellent 2008-2009 season,” says Joseph.

The Katy community will surely be cheering both Coach Joseph and the Tigers to yet another state championship this year. **KM**

MELANIE SAXTON is a Katy resident and proud mom to daughter, Emily. She enjoys writing and volunteering in the community.

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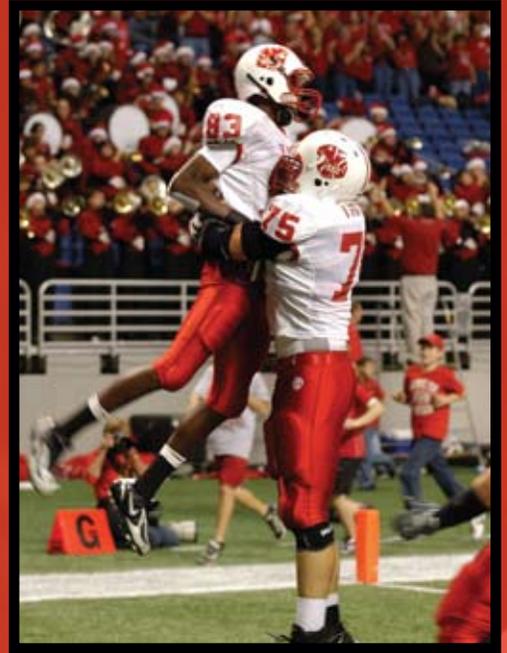
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