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# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

## Biting Heads Off

What has been at best a poorly kept secret in Brevard County has now become nationwide information. The coach at one of Vero's neighboring schools, Eau Gallie High School, is using Marine Corps drill instructor tactics to fire up his players to win games. In fact, he does things even the Marines are afraid to do. He bites the heads off live frogs in front of his team in an effort to "inspire" them.

In a TV interview the coach admitted he not only bites the heads off live frogs, but does a lot of other things — some of them unprintable — to "psyche up" his team. "Like coach, like team," he said.

The boys agree. At least those who were willing to talk agreed. Seeing their football coach bite the head off a live frog and spit the bloody thing on the ground, or

seeing him cut his head with a razor and let the blood run down over his eyes, gives them a "funny feeling down inside," one 17-year-old said. "It makes us want to go out and draw blood from the other team."

Comparatively few players go out for football at Eau Gallie High School. And, unfortunately, the coach's tactics haven't been too successful this year. They've been badly trounced in three out of four games.

Many of the parents seem to think the coach is doing a fine job. "He's being paid to win games," one mother said. "If that's his way to try to win, then what's wrong with it?"

What's wrong with it is a matter for the school board to decide. However, the matter brings into the open the age-old question of the

purpose of high school football. Is it, as the mother-fan said, to "win games?" And if that's the purpose, is training boys to "bring blood" a legitimate tactic?

This raises an even more serious question, that of motivational technique. My senior year at VBHS we had a football coach the boys called "The Monster." His tactic was to get the boys to hate him enough so they'd take it out on the opposing team. We lost all but two games that season and the coach left before the school year was out.

Biting the head off a live frog may make the young, impressionable boys "hit harder." But a bigger question remains. Does it build character? And what about the use of vulgar and profane language, or slurring references to a boy's religion or race? Such things would never be tolerated in

a classroom — why on a high school football field?

Today's high school coaches are part of an entire educational system. Their purpose is not to win. That is a happy by-product. Their purpose is to teach. In football, part of the teaching is to show young men how to hit hard and take hard licks without whining — for that is what life is all about. But that can be done through positive motivation — without vulgar language, abusive practice sessions and bloody frogs' heads.

Coaches who are hired to win games, especially those who use questionable motivational techniques, make little more than a Friday night contribution to the adrenal glands. But is that enough to give to a boy who will soon graduate and never play football again — but does have to face life head on?