



Interview with Tony Dungy | Executive Summary

Mark Sanborn: If someone were to ask you about your story, what would you say?

Tony Dungy: The biggest thing for me is the impact that people have had on my life, starting with my parents. I had parents who were schoolteachers, and they raised us right as youngsters. They taught us the right things to do, how to treat people, and what was important in life. After getting that start, I had many people pour into my life: high school coaches, college coaches, and mentors. I am a product of all of those people.

Mark Sanborn: As a coach, how do you get other people as committed to your vision and mission as you are?

Tony Dungy: Chuck Noll, my first boss, told me that as a coach, you have to be a great salesman. You have to take what you believe is right, and it doesn't matter that you know it; you have to get your players to know it. How do you get them to believe? It's selling your vision and getting them to understand the big picture.

Mark Sanborn: You demonstrated that in the NFL there are different ways to win. Your approach to coaching was a contrast to some of the emotional antics of other coaches.

Tony Dungy: The best advice I ever got was from Chuck Noll when I started working for him in 1981. He said, "Number one, be yourself. You have to lead in your way. I hired you because I like some things that I saw in you. So don't change. Don't try to imitate me, but be who you are." Who I am is somebody who tries to help people. From all of the coaches I played for, that was the thing I cherished the most—their desire to help me.

Mark Sanborn: You've been tremendously successful. How do you avoid the big head syndrome?

Tony Dungy: My mother taught me that it's important to understand where success comes from—it comes from the Lord. My high school coach, Dave Driscoll, gave me a poem when I was 14 that I never forgot. I was a high school quarterback and starting to get a little notoriety in my hometown. The poem said: "Talent is God-given; be thankful. Praise is man-given; be humble. Conceit is self-given; be careful."

Mark Sanborn: Could you give us a one or two minute pep talk?

Tony Dungy: I would like to share what I told our team before our Super Bowl game in 2007. All of the players are counting on each other, wondering who is going to make the difference today. Which players need to step up? Is it the offense, the defense, or special teams? Each one of us needs to sit down and be determined to be the one who makes the big play. You can have an impact right where you are. Oftentimes, we get into a situation, and we look around for someone else to help. We wonder who can step up and make a difference, which player will step up to win the game today. Look inside of you. Figure out what you can do, and you can be the one.

Action Plan:

- ✓ Why should other people get excited about your vision? What's in it for them? Wrestle with these questions this month, and practice the sales pitch for your personal vision.
- ✓ What is your position on the team? In what areas do your teammates rely on you? Make a list of your primary contributions to the team. Hone in on the top two or three most important roles and be conscious of doing them superbly this month.