

# Criteria for Earning a Varsity Letter

Dennis Kalpin, Head Coach, Alexandria Cardinals

Coach Kalpin coached high school football for 47 years, retiring after the 2007 season. He was an assistant coach for 18 seasons and a head coach for 29, giving him a total of 459 games coached. He was a head coach at Belgrade, Fargo Oak Grove and Alexandria. He accumulated an overall head coaching record of 167-115-2.

The head coach has many items to take care of from administrative to organizational to on the field coaching. Suggestions that would save some time and also ease a potential friction issue between a coach and a player and his parents would be most welcome. Sometimes the issue of how a player earns a varsity football letter is a point of concern. That is the basis of this article.

**M**any years ago, I came across an article in a football coaching magazine how a coach in a small town in North Dakota determined how to determine letter winners at the varsity level for his high school. I have used the basis of that article, fitting it into our system and our community, for the criteria in awarding varsity letters during my career as the head coach at Alexandria.

The job of a head coach involves many issues that are not directly related to what happens on the field. Needless to say, some are very important to players and their parents. One of those questions used to be "how come another player got a letter and my son did not?" In years past the sole determining factor was, how many quarters of varsity games did the player get in? The requirement used was that during the season you had to play in one-fourth of the total quarters to earn a letter. This involved a great deal of time after each game to record and file for a player. Of course, there are always those players who start, play every game and don't need any type of recording to determine if they are going to earn a letter. However, no matter what system is used, there will always be a few questionable players to consider to there must be some recording of facts for those players on the "bubble", usually tailend juniors and a handful of sophomores. To handle these, I have the individual player take the criteria sheet home and fill it out to the best of his ability. I do the same, and with a conference between the two of us, we come to a consensus if

*Continued on page 49*

## Alexandria cardinal football criterea for earning a varsity letter - 24 Points needed to earn a varsity letter

1. 1 Point for each half of varsity game participation
2. 2 Points for satisfactory attendance in our out-of-season strength program during the school year
3. 2 Points for satisfactory attendance in our summer strength program
4. 1 Point for participating in each additional school sport at jefferson. (Previous year at high school level)
5. 1 Point for participating in our acceleration program
6. 2 Points for participating satisfactorily in our football fundraiser.
7. 2 Points for scoring 50 points or more on our fitness testing.
8. 2 Points for no late of unexcused practices. 4 Points for perfect attendance
9. 2 Points for no team rule violations and no reports from the office or teachers. (No deficiencies in the classroom).
10. 1 Point for a 2.5 Gpa or 2 points for making the first quarter honor roll.
11. 1 Point for returning all equipment within one week after the last game. (1 Point deducted from your total for every day your equipment is late).
12. 1-3 Points for seniors only, who finish the season in god standing and make daily contributions in practice. This is determined by the coaches.
13. 1 Point for all players on the game roster for a section championship game.
14. 1 Point for all players on the game roster for a state tournament game. (Maximum of one point)
15. 1 Point for working as a volunteer at a football project such as:
  - Saturday youth football(1 pt)
  - The local punt, pass, and kick contest(1 pt)
  - The cardinal fever promotion (1 pt)
  - The summer cardinal football specialist camps (1pt)
  - Ymca youth flag football (1 pt)

# The Minnesota Vikings

## “On the Field and in the Community – Your Special Team”

The Minnesota Vikings are more than a football team. The coaches, players and staff are your neighbors. Their wives or husbands may be your co-workers. Their children attend school with your children. The Vikings are part of the community. Many schools, hospital charities and civic groups have been impacted by player involvement, staff participation and family volunteerism.

The Vikings organization is your neighbor, too, as corporate citizen activity involved in policy and service to Minnesota. The Vikings community relations department and Vikings Children's Fund handle a broad range of requests including player appearances, in-kind donations, partnering with non-profit groups on fundraisers, the production of public service announcements and team philanthropy. Since its inception in 1978, the VCF has donated more than \$4.5 million to the University of Minnesota Department of Pediatrics. The VCF has

maintained a commitment to youth and families by distributing funds toward youth development, family services and education support – a total of nearly \$8 million given back to the community.

Under the direction of Zygi and Mark Wilf, the Vikings have also grown their commitment to youth football. Recently, Vikings Rookie of the Year running back Adrian Peterson visited the Brainerd area to honor Brainerd High School Football Coach Ron Stolski and promote the NFL Play 60 fitness campaign, while Jared Allen spoke to the Moorhead Spud Youth Football camp in Moorhead. Additionally, in establishing the Vikings Youth Football Advisory Board, the Vikings have enhanced their presence and support of the growth of football throughout the entire state.



*Vikings Executive Director of Community Relations/Youth Football Brad Madson congratulates Glencoe-Silver Lake Head Football Coach Dave Dose on being selected as the 2007 Minnesota Vikings High School Football Coach of the Year. Glencoe-Silver Lake is currently the back-to-back state champion in Class AAA, with a combined 17-1 record over the past two seasons under Coach Dose.*

## Criteria For Earning a Varsity Letter

*Continued from page 47*

enough points were earned for a letter. More often than not, a player will tell me after he has gone through the criteria sheet on his own volition that he does not have enough points and a conference is not necessary. As the head coach, where the “buck stops” in determining who letters, it is convenient for me to take this pressure off my shoulders with this system. I do not have the pressure of getting players into the game so he gets enough quarters to get a letter. Sure, we bend over backwards to get kids into the game but for other more important reasons than just to get a letter.

The opportunity to get into a game, to have that game experience, to earn a letter is important. I also believe that there are other intangibles that are important to the success of a football program on and off the field. Things like school citizenship, academics, paying the price in the weight room, punctuality, attendance, involvement with our community football events and being involved in other school activities to name a few. These develop character, a work ethic, a concept to team first, and that other things are important in life other than being a football player. These are points of emphasis in earning points in our lettering criteria.

This system has worked very well for us. Over the years in Alexandria, I have had little or no problems with the issue of players lettering. I have a handout of the lettering criteria for every parent and player at the beginning of each season. I also mention those other things that we think are important other than just playing in a game. We want each player to know where he stands on the depth chart and that each player is important in what he contributes to the team whether that be in practice or in a game. I mention at my parents meeting in the fall, that I have been an athlete, I have been the parent of athletes, and now I have been a football coach for these many years and the most difficult role was being a parent. We realize that he is their pride and joy and we feel it is important that we handle him the same way. Our goal every year is to have each player and their parents, have the most enjoyable season possible. We always hope that each season is a “lifetime of memories” for the players and their parents, especially the seniors and their parents.