

# This Week in Football – Week 9

By Tom Downs, Essex Chargers 7/8 Offensive Coordinator

For the fifth straight week, the Chargers competed for all four quarters against Lyndon. However, we had to compete in a different way. We looked at Lyndon's record prior to our game and looked at who they played. We were honest with our kids and told them that we should win this week going away because it looked like Lyndon was having a down year luckily for us.

Having said that, the coaching staff realized that this was still a great teaching moment for the kids. We told them that character in the game of football comes in three forms. First, how do you handle yourself through effort and perseverance when the other team is kicking your butt. We had that happen to us a couple times this year against St. Albans and Chittenden South and we can still do a better job when the chips are down. Second, how do you handle pressure in a close game? Do you rise to the occasion or wilt under the pressure? We experienced that against Rutland and Chittenden East and stood up pretty well as we all know.

Finally, third, how do you handle yourself when you are expected to beat another team by a lot? Do you still compete at your best when things are coming easy, or do you show signs of laziness? These questions were answered this past Saturday against Lyndon.

We went into this week with the slogan "Dominate with intent". Our meaning was dominating a team means nothing if you do not have an intent for dominating that team. Why not still learn life lessons even when you are going to win easily? We told the kids that in life you are going to have you moments when you are outmatched, but it's how you handle it that matters. They will also have times in life where they are evenly matched against something else and they will need to rise to the occasion. Finally, there will be times in life when they will be in a situation where they are in a dominate position. It would be a complete waste of time to just dominate your opponent and not get anything else from that experience.

That is where "dominate with intent" comes in. We wanted the kids to dominate but have a secondary reason for doing so. Picture it as having your cake and eating it too, or perhaps a cherry on top. The "intent" this past week was to dominate as much as possible early and

often so that every player on the team would get a lot of playing time. This turns a typically selfish act of dominating a team for pleasure, into a more selfless act of dominating a team to allow more playing time for other teammates, and also helping to develop next year's future starters. We used it as motivation to develop our team as opposed to building our ego.

That was the theory anyway, and for whatever reason, our kids responded. The starters pushed the score to 22-0 without even four minutes coming off the clock in the first quarter. It was inspiring. We were able to roll second Blue team kids in early and we were able to give the gold team significant playing time as well. This allowed our younger kids a chance to experience high level football. It bodes very well for us next year that they get these types of experiences now. Next year, I am confident next year's starters will roll into the 2020 season like they own the place. That all started with the starters being selfless as opposed to selfish.

Having said that, it is not easy maintaining a consistent effort when you are up big in a game. We had one moment late in the first half and one early in the second half where it looked like we might take the rest of the game off and just go through the motions. The kids were able to right themselves and showed good effort after those momentary lapses. What impressed me most was the effort of the gold defense. Yes, they gave up a couple of touchdowns, but what mattered most was the effort. They were facing kids twice their size, but they did not let that affect their motivation. They played with character and integrity and faced uphill odds with grit. Again, that bodes very well for next year.

Our next opponent, Colchester, is very familiar to us. While we played well the first time against them, and we were able to handle our business for the most part, Colchester is a very well coached team and will have adjustments going into the next game. We will by no means take them lightly. We will be preparing very hard for them this week.

As always, we have nothing to lose which will allow us to play like we have everything to lose. Let's leave it all on the field Chargers and play loose. Let's bring it to Colchester. It's playoff time!

This week's Charger Highlights

### **Charger Highlights:**

**The Gold Team** – Showed up and played hard. Very proud of you guys.

**Nathan** – Scored a touchdown that seemed unlikely at first. He caught a slot screen and rumbled down the field. Every would-be tackler just seemed to fall off of him. He is not that fast, nor is he that shifty, but he finds a way to move downfield.

**Thomas** – Really showed us something doing a great job maintaining contain on defense while playing defensive end.

**High School Players and Coaching Staff** – It was great to once again see some of the high school coaches and players come to the game. There was a large group of high school players in the end zone cheering our team on. I KNOW it inspired the kids and coaches alike on our sideline. I know we were motivated to put on a show. I hope you liked it.

That is it for now. I hoped you all enjoyed a little peak into the week that was. See you all next week!