



The Thursday Speeches: Lessons in Life, Leadership, and Football from Coach Don James

Peter Tormey

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"Having heard 18 years worth of those from Coach James as an assistant at two different universities, I can attest to the fact that Peter Tormey has nailed these in this book. - Skip Hall, Boise, Idaho.

"Anyone who aims to become a truly great human being should read The Thursday Speeches." - Tim Cowan, former Husky quarterback, Seattle.

"Best work I have read in quite some time ... the insights into leadership, details, personal character, the importance of mental preparation and desire to compete are extremely valuable." - Mike Roarke, Portland, Oregon.

Two days before Christmas 1974, Don James seized the reins of a University of Washington football program in disarray. Immediately, James challenged players to do the hard work necessary to get to the Rose Bowl. Some players laughed, reminding James that Washington hadn't been to the Rose Bowl since 1963. James insisted on his vision. In his third season, Washington advanced to the Rose Bowl and beat the heavily favored Michigan Wolverines. In 18 years at Washington, James' compelling stories in his pregame speeches helped transform the Huskies from mediocrity to national champions. A member of the College Football Hall of Fame and twice named National Coach of the Year, James remains the most successful football coach in Washington and the Pacific-12 Conference history. Now, the inspiring stories and invaluable life lessons James imparted to his players are available to all in "The Thursday Speeches."

As but one measure of his coaching skill, Sports Illustrated once named the three best college football coaches in the country: No. 1, Don James; No. 2, Don James; No. 3, Don James.

A member of the College Football Hall of Fame, the Husky Hall of Fame, and twice named National Coach of the Year, James remains the most successful football coach in Washington and the Pacific-12 Conference history. President of the American Football Coaches Association in 1989, James compiled a record of 153-57-2 at Washington and led the Huskies to 15 bowl games (10-5) including nine straight from 1979-1987. He guided the Huskies to six Rose Bowls and is one of only four coaches to win four Rose Bowl games. His 1991 team finished the season 12-0, beat Michigan in the Rose Bowl, and was named National Champion by USA Today/CNN, UPI, the Football Writers, Sports Illustrated, and several computer rankings.

Written by Peter Tormey, Ph.D., a three-year UW letterman linebacker for James (1976-1979), The Thursday Speeches puts readers in the room with the legendary coach, revealing the exact words James used to inspire the Huskies to slay the football giants of his day. The book, which also contains new insights into James' leadership, is organized into four sections:

Part I: Getting to the Rose Bowl.

Part II: Themes of the Thursday Speeches

* Attitude

* Life Lessons

* Competitive Greatness

* Visualizing Victory

PART III: Glimmers – Short essays derived from interviews with Coach James.

PART IV: A Lasting Legacy – Tributes to Coach James' influence from Coach Gary Pinkel, University of Missouri; Coach Nick Saban, University of Alabama; Sam Wick, friend; Jeffrey James, grandson; James' pastor, Rev. Jerry Mitchell; and Jill Woodruff, one of James' three children.

The book stems from Tormey's doctoral research in Leadership Studies (Gonzaga University). James wrote the speeches before practice each Wednesday, by longhand, on 11-by-14-inch yellow legal pads.

Exhibiting a voracious appetite for reading and an expansive intellect, James uses a wide range of powerful stories to engage the Huskies including topics such as Freud and Frankl, the Cheshire Cat in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, the benefits of suffering, the importance of attitude, the key to problem-solving, the true meaning of fun. He fashions speeches around figures such as George Washington Carver, Benjamin Franklin, Julius Caesar, Vince Lombardi, and Helen Keller, and many others.

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