

*A moment from **The Big Comeback***

Before the wins, before the whistle, before the comeback — there was the moment everything I thought defined me disappeared.

I lifted the lid of the box marked **Game Film** and pulled out a DVD from last season.

Lower State Championship, 2011.

We'd lost by three points in overtime, but back then, I still believed we were building something that would last. I turned the disc over in my hands, its surface smudged and worn — like it had been handled too many times by someone trying to hold on to something that was already slipping away.

I tossed it back into the box.

A puff of dust rose into the air, hanging there for a moment before settling back into silence.

Legacies are fragile.

Fifteen years of work, reduced to a stack of boxes. A career. A purpose. Packed up and pushed aside.

Everything I thought defined me was gone.

Fifteen years of coaching at this school. Four as the head football coach. All of it crammed into cardboard — office supplies, clothes, books, game film. Memories.

That one hurt the most.

Memories have a way of reminding you how easily a life's work can be erased. How quickly a name can disappear from a door. How fast a role can be reassigned. It was as if I'd never existed at all.

I stood alone in that empty office, the walls stripped bare, the echoes of past seasons bouncing quietly in my head. No whistles. No meetings. No players waiting for direction.

Just me.

And the unsettling realization that when the title was taken away, I didn't know who I was without it.

Coaching had never just been my job. It was my identity. It was how I measured time — seasons instead of years, Fridays instead of weekends. It was how I served, how I led, how I believed I mattered.

And now it was gone.

I told myself I wasn't bitter. That I understood how this business worked. That I didn't feel entitled to anything.

But standing there, staring at those boxes, honesty had a way of breaking through.

I was grieving.

Not just the job — but the man I'd been while doing it.

I closed the box and taped it shut, the sound final and sharp in the quiet room. Another chapter sealed. Another door closed.

As I carried the box toward the hallway, I felt the weight of everything I couldn't take with me — the relationships, the trust, the years invested with no guarantee they'd ever be acknowledged again.

Walking out of that building for the last time, I didn't feel angry.

I felt empty.

And in that emptiness sat a question I wasn't ready to answer:

If I wasn't a head football coach anymore... then who was I?

I stepped into the hallway, the box pressed against my chest, and paused for a moment longer than necessary. I looked back at the doorway — the empty frame where my nameplate used to be — and tried to memorize it, even though I wasn't sure why.

This building had been my second home. I'd walked these halls early in the morning and late at night. I'd paced them after losses, replaying decisions I couldn't take back. I'd sprinted through them after wins, heart pounding, already thinking about what came next.

Now there was nothing next.

At least not yet.

I carried the box outside, the afternoon heat wrapping around me as I pushed through the doors. The sounds of campus life went on as usual — students laughing somewhere in the distance, a car starting, a bell ringing — all of it painfully normal.

The world hadn't stopped just because mine had.

I set the box down beside my truck and rested my hands on the tailgate, staring out across the parking lot. For the first time in years, I had nowhere to be. No practice to plan. No meeting to run. No film to break down.

I should have felt relieved.

Instead, I felt exposed.

Coaching had always given me armor. As long as I was working toward the next season, the next opponent, the next goal, I didn't have to sit with the harder questions. I didn't have to slow down long enough to feel the doubt.

But now there was no schedule to hide behind.

The truth pressed in quietly: being fired didn't just take away my position — it stripped away the story I'd been telling myself about who I was and what I was worth.

I'd always believed effort and loyalty counted for something. That if you showed up, poured yourself into the work, and did right by kids, it would eventually come back around.

Standing there in that parking lot, I wasn't so sure anymore.

I climbed into the driver's seat and closed the door, the cab suddenly too quiet. I sat there with my hands on the steering wheel, staring straight ahead, feeling the weight of a future that no longer looked anything like the one I'd planned.

And that was the moment it finally settled in.

This wasn't just a setback.

This was the end of one life — and the uncomfortable beginning of another.

I didn't know where I was headed next.

I only knew this:

Whatever came after this would have to be built from the ground up.

Because the man who walked out of that building wasn't the coach I'd been.

He was someone new.

And I had no idea yet who that was.

This moment is only the beginning.

The journey forward weaves through faith, family, football, and the long road back to purpose.