



THE AD ALMANAC

*A Field Manual for the Modern
Athletic Director*

by Lee Burchett

Foreword by Tom Brotzman

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The AD Almanac: A Field Manual for the Modern Athletic Director

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Vykan Legacy Press

Unleash Potential. Conquer Legacy.

First Edition



Foreword

by Tom Brotzman, M.Ed.

“My life revolves around sports.”

If you picked up this book, chances are you have said this statement numerous times. Your life in athletics probably started at a young age when you first started playing a sport. That playing career may have lasted through elementary school, high school, and even through college. Now, in addition to watching sports every day, you may be lucky enough to still be around the athletic arena in the role of coach or athletic director.

Such is my story. After playing three sports throughout high school, my playing career unfortunately came to an end before college because of an injury. But, fortunately, 26 years ago I entered the field of education and began my coaching career. I coached basketball, baseball, and softball for the next 24 years. For the past 20 years, I have been serving in the role of athletic director for a school district in New Jersey. In addition, I manage an athletic conference that includes 13 school districts throughout Hunterdon County, New Jersey. My experience has provided me with the unique perspective of not only overseeing athletic programs, but also working directly with student-athletes, coaches, athletic directors and the broader educational community. Through these roles, I have witnessed firsthand the powerful role sports can play in shaping young lives—not just on the field, but off it as well.

“My life revolves around sports.”

Within the first five minutes of meeting Lee Burchett, that same sentiment was exchanged between the two of us, and I immediately knew he and I had a lot in common. But it did not take me long after that to realize that not only did our lives revolve around sports, but our feelings about what sports can do for one’s life were very much out of the same playbook. The *AD Almanac* provides athletic directors with a clear, concise, easy-to-follow glance into that playbook.

Burchett masterfully combines his many years of coaching experience with his education in sports management and leadership to produce a must-have handbook for athletic directors. He does a phenomenal job of presenting two central themes in the *AD Almanac* that resonated with me personally. The first is especially important in this new era of athletics, where there are two extremes. One, being that everyone “gets a trophy” and the second being “win at all cost.” Burchett states throughout the book that an athletic program’s scoreboard should measure character as much as competition. One of the central missions should always be to create a culture where success is not solely defined by win-loss records but by the development of character, teamwork, and leadership. Throughout my career, I have always believed that sports programs should teach life lessons, whether through the triumph of victory or the humility of defeat. This belief stems from my playing career, which included going three years without tasting the joy of victory on the football field. This experience has guided me through the rest of my life, specifically teaching me how to be resilient when faced with adversity. In the *AD Almanac*, Burchett expands on this point when he states success is measured not just in

wins, but in growth metrics like maturity, self discipline, emotional intelligence, and teamwork.

The more central theme in the *AD Almanac* involves Burchett detailing step-by-step the important role that athletic directors play in creating a culture that is both enduring and that allows for the growth and development of young athletes. As the author eloquently states,

“The measure of a great athletic director is not found in the number of championships won but in the number of lives changed. Leadership in athletics is both a privilege and a responsibility: to guide others toward excellence while modeling the humility and integrity that define true greatness.”

Burchett emphasizes the concept of servant leadership and how a leader who leads through service and with humility creates an environment where winning is a byproduct and not the goal. What struck me about the *AD Almanac* is how it provides a blueprint that athletic directors can easily follow to become true leaders who model behavior and build future leaders. From my own personal experience, I know how rewarding it was when a former player of mine came back years later to coach with me, and then went on to become a leader in the education field. Burchett gives practical tools to use and examples of how they have been utilized to not only build a program, but also a culture that lasts for generations. Or, in Burchett’s own words, creating a “legacy that endures through the lives we build.”

The AD Almanac is more than just a guide for athletic directors—it’s a call to action for those of us in leadership roles in sports. It provides the tools and insights needed to foster a culture of character that transcends wins and losses and endures over time. This book is an essential read for anyone who wants to leave a lasting, positive impact on student-athletes. I highly recommend this book to all athletic directors, coaches, and administrators who believe in the power of sports to shape lives.

Tom Brotzman, [M.Ed.](#)

Founder/Managing Director of Brotzman Athletics and Activities Consultants (BAAC)

Athletic Director for 20 years

Athletic Conference Manager for 20 years

Coach for 24 years

Teacher for 26 years

Dedication

To every athletic leader who builds programs that outlive them—

To the ones who show up early, stay late, and hold the standard even when no one is watching.

To the ones who sacrifice their time, their energy, and their comfort so young people can find purpose, belonging, and belief in themselves.

To the ones who choose character over convenience, culture over shortcuts, and legacy over applause.

To the ones who lead with conviction, serve with humility, and understand that true greatness is measured not in trophies, but in the lives they shape along the way.

This book is for you—
the bridge builders,
the culture makers,
the leaders who leave fingerprints on generations.

May your work outlast your name,
and may your legacy echo long after the final whistle.

How to Use This Book

The AD Almanac was designed to be more than a book—it is a field manual, a leadership coach, and a systems blueprint you can use every single day. This is a resource you should return to often, mark up, adapt, and integrate into the rhythm of your athletic department. The more you use it, the more powerful it becomes.

Here's how to get the most out of it:

1. Read the Chapters to Build Understanding

Each chapter lays the foundation for a modern, high-impact athletic department. They combine leadership theory, practical application, real examples, and systems thinking.

Use these chapters to deepen your perspective and sharpen your leadership philosophy.

2. Use the Templates to Build Your Systems

The appendices include *ready-to-use* tools:

- Game-day checklists
 - Field and referee preparation workflows
 - Culture surveys
 - Legacy Library folder maps
 - Annual review calendars
- These documents are designed to save you time and create consistency. Print them. Share them. Customize them to fit your school.

3. Implement One System at a Time

Don't try to overhaul everything at once. Instead:

- Choose one checklist
 - One communication rhythm
 - One culture initiative
 - One improvement cycle
- Small, consistent systems compound into massive change.

This book works best when implemented gradually and intentionally.

4. Use the Reflections to Strengthen Culture

At the end of each chapter, you'll find reflection questions designed to help you:

- Evaluate your current systems
- Identify gaps
- Align actions with mission

- Build momentum
Use them in:
- Coaching meetings
- Administrative retreats
- Leadership councils
- Personal journaling

These reflections turn ideas into action.

5. Integrate This Book Into Staff Development

The AD Almanac functions as a built-in professional development tool. You can use individual chapters to lead:

- Coach meetings
- Preseason summits
- Leadership trainings
- Mentorship sessions

Each section provides language and structure that unify your department around shared values.

6. Keep the Legacy Lens in Focus

This book is not simply about operations—it's about building people. Every system, checklist, and strategy points back to one question:

Does this help us build a program that outlives us?

Use this lens to guide decisions, evaluate progress, and shape your culture.

7. Return to This Book Throughout the Year

Leadership is seasonal. Systems evolve. Revisit this book:

- Before each sports season
- During planning meetings
- When onboarding new staff
- When you feel overwhelmed or stuck
- When you need clarity or inspiration

This book grows with you and becomes more valuable over time.

Final Thought

You don't need to do everything in this book—
but if you do *something* consistently,
your program will rise, your culture will strengthen,
and your legacy will take shape.

This is your field manual.
Use it boldly. Use it intentionally.
Use it to build something that stands long after you're gone.

The Vykan Legacy Statement

There is a moment when leadership stops being a job and becomes a calling— a moment when a coach, a teacher, an athletic director, or a community leader decides: **I will build something that lasts.**

Vykan Legacy was born for that moment.

Vykan Legacy exists to **ignite leaders**, equip them with **systems that scale**, and empower them to build **cultures that transform lives**. We believe that athletics is more than competition, education is more than instruction, and leadership is more than influence—

it is the power to shape identity, elevate purpose, and create movements that outlive the people who start them.

Our mission is simple and bold:

To help leaders build programs that endure.

To build systems that strengthen people.

To create cultures that change generations.

We stand at the intersection of **sport, leadership, and human potential**, forging tools, frameworks, and ideas that empower leaders to rise above chaos, crush complacency, and lead with clarity, conviction, and purpose.

Vykan Legacy is not a brand.

It is not a business.

It is a movement.

A movement built on the belief that leadership should be transformational, not transactional; that culture should be intentional, not accidental; and that every program—athletic, academic, or community—deserves systems strong enough to carry its mission forward long after its leaders retire.

We exist to serve those who serve others.

To fuel the builders, the visionaries, the culture shapers, the bridge makers.

To give leaders the tools to build not just programs, but **legacy**.

Because the world doesn't change when leaders talk about what could be.

The world changes when leaders build systems that make greatness unavoidable.

This is Vykan Legacy.

This is the blueprint.

This is the movement.

Build boldly. Lead relentlessly. Leave nothing behind but legacy.

Chapter 1: The New Era of Athletic Leadership

The AD Almanac – Systems That Build Legacy

Athletic directors today stand at the intersection of education, culture, and community. What was once a position focused on scheduling, compliance, and supervision has evolved into a calling that blends management, marketing, mentorship, and moral leadership. The modern AD is not just an organizer of contests but an architect of culture. In every practice plan, facility upgrade, and community partnership lies an opportunity to shape the values and experiences that define a generation.

This transformation did not occur by accident. As high-school and collegiate athletics expanded into billion-dollar ecosystems of participation and engagement, communities began to see sports as more than recreation, they became classrooms for life lessons.

Note: This book uses the term athletic director (AD) interchangeably throughout for clarity. Study confirms that participation in organized athletics fosters social-emotional growth, academic persistence, and leadership development when programs are intentionally structured around purpose and belonging (Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2014). Yet such outcomes are not automatic. They depend on leadership.

The Shift from Management to Movement

The traditional athletic director was expected to keep operations functional: fields prepared, officials paid, buses scheduled. Those responsibilities remain, but effectiveness now requires a shift from management to movement. Management keeps programs compliant; movement builds communities around shared vision.

In leadership theory, this shift parallels the transition from transactional to transformational leadership. Transactional leaders maintain systems; transformational leaders elevate them through shared mission, moral conviction, and collaboration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The athletic director who embraces this approach becomes a catalyst for cultural alignment, inspiring coaches and athletes to view every game as a stage for values such as integrity, perseverance, and service.

In practical terms, this means leading from purpose rather than pressure. Athletic leaders who connect their operations to a clearly defined “why” influence not only win-loss records but also academic performance, school climate, and community unity. The athletic department becomes the heartbeat of the school, modeling the same collaboration, accountability, and pride educators seek to cultivate in classrooms.

Systems Thinking and Strategic Culture

Innovation in athletics administration begins with systems thinking—the understanding that every element of an athletic program interacts within a larger network of

relationships. Field maintenance, transportation, communication, and fan engagement may appear unrelated, but they all influence culture, perception, and sustainability.

Senge (1990) defined systems thinking as the discipline for seeing the whole, recognizing patterns, and identifying leverage points for change. For athletic directors, that leverage point is *culture*. Culture determines whether a department reacts to problems or anticipates them, whether staff feel burdened or inspired.

Developing such systems requires four competencies:

- **Vision Alignment:** Every coach, athlete, and volunteer must know the department’s mission and how it connects to the district’s educational goals.
- **Process Design:** Game-day checklists, emergency protocols, and communication plans must be standardized yet flexible.
- **Measurement:** Success should be tracked not only in wins and losses but also in leadership development, academic data, and community engagement.
- **Continuous Learning:** Programs should review outcomes, gather feedback, and refine operations—mirroring professional learning communities in education.

When these competencies are practiced consistently, the athletic department operates as a learning organization—adaptive, collaborative, and value-driven.

The Cultural Imperative

Athletics remains one of the few spaces in education that brings together students, parents, alumni, and community members in the same physical environment. That reality grants athletic directors extraordinary cultural influence. The late coach John Wooden described leadership as “the ability to get others to do what they do not want to do and like it.” In the 21st-century athletic department, this means turning compliance tasks into culture moments.

For example, consider a pre-season coaches’ meeting. Administratively, it fulfills a requirement; culturally, it can ignite a shared vision. (Results are always shared in aggregate to comply with FERPA privacy standards.) When framed as a *Legacy Coaching Summit*—with storytelling, recognition, and alignment, the same meeting becomes a ritual of unity. Similarly, posting a digital “Legacy Leaders GPA Board” transforms grade checks into a visible commitment to academics. These innovations, grounded in the *Transformed Best Practices for Athletic Directors* framework, redefine operations as opportunities to reinforce mission.

The Ethical Foundation of Leadership

Authentic leadership is inseparable from ethics. Coaches and administrators carry moral responsibility for modeling the behaviors they wish to see in young people. Servant leadership provides the philosophical anchor for this responsibility. Greenleaf (1970)

proposed that true leaders serve first, seeking the growth and well-being of those they lead. Applied to athletics, servant leadership means prioritizing the holistic development of student-athletes—spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical.

Studies in educational and sport contexts confirm that servant leadership positively correlates with athlete satisfaction, team cohesion, and organizational commitment (Hammermeister, Burton, Pickering, & Chase, 2012). In practice, servant-minded ADs listen more than they command, empower more than they dictate, and measure success by the legacy left in people, not policies.

Innovation and the Future of the Profession

Athletic directors now manage a convergence of technology, mental-health awareness, and community expectation that demands continuous innovation. The most effective leaders are early adopters of tools and ideas that save time and amplify impact:

- **Data dashboards** that integrate scheduling, eligibility, attendance, and academic tracking.
- **AI-supported communication systems** that streamline reminders and newsletters.
- **Partnership models** connecting athletics with local businesses and service organizations.
- **Leadership development pipelines** that train captains and assistant coaches in culture stewardship.

These innovations should never replace relationships; they should enhance them. Adopt new tools only when they strengthen clarity, connection, or care. The AD who embraces technology as a servant of mission—not a distraction from it—creates scalability without losing authenticity.

From the Field

At one high school in northeast Florida, the athletic director introduced a “Friday Focus” email—a one-page update highlighting a coach, a volunteer, and a community partner each week. The initiative began as a simple communication tool but quickly evolved into a culture engine. Coaches forwarded the email to parents, students nominated peers for recognition, and local sponsors began contributing to the highlighted stories. What started as an operational tactic became a legacy ritual. The lesson: systems ignite culture when they reflect consistent values.

Reflection and Application

- What areas of your current program operate on management rather than movement?

- How can you apply systems thinking to align daily operations with long-term culture goals?
 - Which servant-leadership behaviors do you most naturally demonstrate, and which require growth?
 - In what ways can technology amplify—not replace—human connection in your athletic community?
-

Scholarly Insight

Leadership in athletics requires integration of vision, systems, and service. When athletic directors lead with purpose and design, they transform programs from isolated teams into community institutions. As Fullan (2014) observed in educational reform, sustainable improvement arises not from mandates but from intrinsic motivation and shared moral purpose. The same truth defines the new era of athletic leadership: culture follows character, and systems follow vision.

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Thank You for Reading

Thank you for taking the time to read Chapter 1 of *The AD Almanac*.

If this chapter resonated with you, challenged you, or gave you even one practical idea you can implement immediately — imagine what the full manual will do for your department.

Athletic leadership is not a side role.

It is not a seasonal job.

It is systems.

It is culture.

It is leadership.

And it requires intentional structure.

The AD Almanac was written to serve athletic leaders at every stage — from first-year rookies to seasoned veterans — with practical tools, frameworks, and strategies that can be used immediately.

If you are serious about building something that lasts:

Visit:

www.VykanLegacy.com

There you can:

- Explore additional resources for athletic leaders
- Access leadership content and tools
- Stay connected with future releases

If you're ready to go deeper and implement the full system:

Purchase the complete book on Amazon.

Build better systems.

Lead stronger culture.

Leave a lasting legacy.

— Lee Burchett