

# DAILY NEWS

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## **NY Giants head coach Tom Coughlin not alone in believing in the power of inspirational adages**

When GM Jerry Reese installs a Super Bowl countdown clock in the Giants' locker room, as he promises, it won't be the only motivational image in the East Rutherford training complex. Tom Coughlin, like many coaches, is a big believer in the power of inspirational adages. Examples are posted throughout the corridors of the Timex facility, and a couple of them are rather lengthy treatises.

There is, for example, the "Big Blue Warrior Creed: Keep your eye on the prize. No challenge too difficult. No sacrifice or self-denial too great. Team first. Athleticism. Focus. Anticipation. Hustle."

And down the hallway from that, "Work hard, do your best, speak the truth, assume no airs, trust in God, have no fear."

Do these images and axioms really work, or are they just empty symbols and platitudes? None in an admittedly small sampling of three Giant players last season could actually repeat the Big Blue Warrior Creed, but that doesn't necessarily mean it doesn't have some subliminal impact.

"You can have positive brainwashing," says Rob Gilbert, a professor of sports psychology at Montclair State. "The best examples of how it works are the 12-step groups, the serenity prayer and even advertising. The most effective inspirational phrase of all might have been Nike's, 'Just do it.'"

"This is advertising for yourself," Gilbert says, offering more examples. "Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you will be among the stars... Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard."

Almost all the professional coaches in our area employ some form of inspirational images, pep talks or posted phrases. Unfortunately, since only one team in each league actually ends up winning the title, most of these efforts inevitably come up short.

Rex Ryan guaranteed a Super Bowl, which didn't work out too well. John Tortorella, recently fired, wouldn't let anybody step on the Rangers' sacred logo on the carpet and posted this phrase in the training center: "Everyone wants to win. Not everyone is willing to prepare to win."

Mike Woodson placed a picture of the Larry O'Brien Championship trophy above each and every Knick locker at Madison Square Garden. The Knicks were knocked out in the second round of the playoffs. On the wall of the Nets' training center, for several years, there is a sign declaring, "It's our time." It hasn't been their time, not even close.

The most successful inspirational image, as judged by championship banners, probably was the simple phrase posted above the tunnel leading from the clubhouse to the field, at the old Yankee Stadium.

“I’d like to thank the good Lord for making me a Yankee” — Joe DiMaggio.

Derek Jeter made off with that particular placard just before the old stadium was demolished. He still seems to be taking it to heart.

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