

Unsung Hero

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He was a quiet kind of a guy who never said much, even when he was expected to speak. For over three decades, the late coach E. T. “Charge” Driggers patrolled the sidelines alongside a fellow legend in the business, Coach J. W. “Whiney” Ingram as “the coaches” at Lexington High School.

The pair amassed 217 victories and three state championships during their tenure at Lexington High School in Lexington, S.C. as well as the greatest upset in the history of the North-South Shrine Bowl in 1954.

They probably would have earned more state championships but the school actually made a conscious decision not to go to the playoffs even though in one of those years they were undefeated.

For the longest time, players would go up to Coach J. W. Ingram and ask if Coach Driggers could talk. “Yes,” said Ingram as he related the story at the Ingram-Driggers Appreciation Day Banquet on February 18, 1984. “He can talk.”

“All I ever hear him say is ‘charge,’” said one player. That’s how he got his nickname- “Charge” Driggers. Many of the hundreds of Lexington High School football players who played for him during his tenure never had a real conversation with him.

I was one of the fortunate ones. I played both men during the sixties. “Charge” Driggers didn’t talk to anyone very much. He was an unsung hero.

“They say the games are won up front, or in the trenches,” said Ingram as he praised his assistant coach at the banquet in 1984. “Charge was not my assistant. We were simply *‘the coaches.’* There was not a finer line coach in high school, college or the pros. And to prove it, Lexington gave up fewer than 100 yards per game over the years while the offense averaged over 300 yards per game on the ground.”

“Charge” Driggers was indeed an unsung hero. He was not alone. Many of the assistant football coaches of their day were great men who never sought

the spotlight and were never interested in head coaching positions. Two that come to mind in the high school ranks were Coach Herbert Smith at Batesburg-Leesville High School and Coach Larry Boswell, who was a top assistant at Saluda, Lower Richland and Irmo High Schools under the legendary Coach Mooney Player.

Unsung heroes like “Charge” Driggers impacted student athletes. They taught the values that are so desperately needed in the educational system today.

When you screwed up, they didn’t have to call your parents. They took action to “correct” the situation right then and there. If you did that today, some kid would file a law suit against the school district and the coach would be run off.

Interestingly, for most of his tenure as an assistant coach at Lexington High School, “Charge” Driggers was never paid a dime. It was not until his later years that he was compensated for his efforts.

What was most amazing about Driggers and Ingram, they actually introduced a concept called “cross-blocking” to high school football in the late forties. “Nobody cross-blocked,” wrote the late Congressman Floyd Spence in a letter read at the 1984 banquet. “I asked my college coaches at USC about cross-blocking. They said, ‘We don’t cross-block in college- that’s done only in the pro’s.’”

When recognized at the banquet in 1984, the typically quiet Driggers said simply “I’d like to thank everyone who had a hand it making this banquet happen. We ought to have these every year. I haven’t seen some of these players in over 30 years. Thank you!”

And that was all he had to say. A man of few words- generally one: “*CHARGE!*”

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