

# God, Balls, & Gordie

an investigation into inspiration  
a documentary feature film

Gordie Gillespie has been coaching young baseball players for 60 years. And football players. And basketball players. He is pretty good at it. He and his kids never lost a game, although they now and then ran out of time or innings while their opponents had more points. The more likely outcome was that they won- more than two thousand, four hundred times.

When one of the schools where Gordie taught did some recent remodeling, they had to factor in a much larger trophy display case to house the rewards of all those wins. That's a good problem to have.

That's a problem we as a society should have- where to house the testaments to lives well lived.

None of the four schools where Gordie coached ever had an enrollment over 1500 students, yet from these small NAIA schools set in small mid-western towns, he managed to put together teams that consistently punched above their weight division. To realize that that is a statistical anomaly is a noteworthy understatement. How far above their weight? How about nine championships; 2402 wins, 1170 losses during 110 seasons over 59 years?

That kind of record speaks to a talent that transcends a sharp eye for athletic ability or a winning personality that encourages players to do their best. It demands the question: "How did this come to be?". And this is the question that we will answer by showing the enormous force for good that Gordie has been in the lives of the thousands of kids he has coached for the better part of a century. It is not about the number of wins ( which is unequalled), it is not about the awards and trophies ( which are legion), and it is not about the other sundry honors and accolades awarded to him- no, rather it is about the kids. Some years ago, while speaking to his fellow coaches during one of those honors, Gordie cut to the chase in terms of the prerequisites of successful coaching-"If you don't love kids, get out, get out now."

His love of kids is the basis for his ability to go to that 'kid at the end of the bench' - the one that was traditionally overlooked, the one that needed an extra bit of attention to unlock the potential within, and reach down inside him, find the best thing about him, bring it out- show it to him, get him to embrace it, and inspire that kid to want to do the same thing for another kid down the road. This is the Gordie ripple effect.

This is a man who has tossed more pebbles into more human ponds producing more ripples of good throughout the world than the next three guys on the inspirational bench combined. He did it through kids, and he did it through sports. One out of three kids he coached grew up to be coaches themselves- and a bunch of their kids are doing the same thing- maintaining that ever expanding ripple.

We will examine the impact of Gordie's pebbles by looking at the lives of those he has touched- some from each of the decades he has coached, and how they are living their lives and consciously using his influence to do the best they can for the kids they are coaching, in all of the sports they are involved with. We will look at the kids as they practice, and as they play. We will see the slo-mo slide into second as well as the work that happens *in* the dugout. And we will see that the teams that trace their roots to Gordie, will leave that dugout cleaner than they found it.

“By their fruits shall you know them.”